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The Influence of the Greek Drama Upon Eugene O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Electra"

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE GREEK DRAMA UPON EUGENE O'NEILL'S "MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA"

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FOREWORD

In his "Mourning Becomes Electra", Eugene O'Neill has taken a great and renowned classical theme and has given it a modern interpretation in the light of his interest in Freudian psychology. In this thesis I have tried to show first the chief details in connection with the Orestea theme as it is given to us by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. I have then analyzed the characters in the Greek dramas since Eugene O'Neill's primary interest is in character. My final attempt has been to compare and contrast the ancient stories with the modern in order to show the influence upon Mr. O'Neill's play both of plot and character. I have dealt finally with a contrast in the outcomes of the plays as resulting from Mr. O'Neill's psychology. The judgment which I have endeavored to form concerning the merits of the modern drama with respect to the ancient has been based upon the difference in psychology of the "Mourning Becomes Electra" and the Orestea of the Greeks. The thesis may not dwell with enough detail upon analysis of the O'Neill characters, but I have felt it wise to analyze these individuals in connection with the Greek and not merely for themselves, since this is primarily a study in Greek influence.

CONTENTS

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CHAPTER I

A TREATMENT OF THE ELECTRA-ORESTES STORY IN GREEK DRAMA

"MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA" shows the influence of the Greek drama both in its technical presentation and interpretation. Before dealing with either of these two phases, I wish to call to mind certain fundamental characteristics of the Greek drama which will be alluded to in the course of the discussion of the drama.

The Greek theater itself was out-of-doors and was in the form of an ampitheater with a place in front of the stage for dancing. The background for this drama was architectural, a temple with its dignified columns taking the place of our stage settings which are usually more elaborate and consequently take away something from the drama itself. The costumes of the Greeks were of the utmost simplicity and consisted usually of long flowing robes which added much to the dignity of the spectacle as a whole. The Greek actors wore masks which bore features characteristic of the individual being portrayed and his traits. The number of actors in the greatest of the Greek dramas was limited, and usually only two or three appeared on the stage at the same time not counting mutes. However, there was nothing meager in the presentation because of the small number of chief actors. In this Greek drama there was also a chorus which was a group who sang and danced and were always in very close connection with what

was happening on the stage. From the chorus the audience often learned of certain events in the past life of the characters, something of their present condition, and sometimes even something of their temperament and what moved them. The chorus also sang beautiful choral odes which were a wonderful combination of dignity and pure lyrical beauty. Thus the chorus did not have an irrelevant part in the drama, but was woven right into the dramatic action. Another very important factor in Greek drama is the complete absence of any violence upon the stage. Anything as violent as a murder or suicide performed before the very eyes of the audience would have offended a certain fine and delicate sensibility which the Greek possessed. He preferred to present any horror to the imagination of the audience where it would really be stamped more effectively than if presented to mere sense-perception. Thus in the Greek drama we often find rather long narrative speeches made perhaps by a messenger who gives an account of a certain violent happening. This seems rather mechanical to us, but a messenger was of primary importance to the Greek who had nothing similar to our modern methods of communication to keep him informed. An act of violence was also often related by the chorus or by one of the characters, but was never committed in the sight of the spectators.

Thus far I have been interested in the more exterior phase of the Greek drama, and I should now like to review briefly the Greek concept of character and the problems in which character was involved. The primary interest in the Greek drama was in the great moral issue and not in any analysis of a rather narrow psy-

chological type. It may be well to deviate for a few moments from Greek drama in particular to certain theories set down by Aristotle in his "Poetics". First of all we see that tragedy was regarded by Aristotle as the highest type of dramatic art, and therefore no common person could ever be tragic because he would possess only a very narrow mental and philosophical outlook which would prevent him from having any such exaltation as we find in many of the Greek characters such as Oedipus. Aristotle also believed that in tragedy the downfall of the main character should be caused by an error or frailty on the part of the individual, and not by any jealous deity. This kept the Greek drama on a very high plane and again stressed the moral issue so that we can say quite truly that art was the handmaiden of morality. These same views are shown very clearly in the work of Aeschylus, one of the dramatists whose influence we are to study. The interest of Aeschylus was in a great moral problem which made his drama very profound with very lofty ethics and religion. The grouping of his plays into trilogies enabled Aeschylus to treat the reconciliation of two mutually antagonistic ideas in the thesis, the antithesis, and finally the synthesis. Also in Aeschylus there is a working out of Aristotle's belief in error and frailty as the cause of downfall. The old theory had consisted in the belief that men fall from prosperity to adversity because of excessive prosperity which caused the envy of the gods to arise and overthrow them. Aeschylus was too profound a thinker to regard this rather irrational concept as true. He saw that an individual's suffering in adversity came from an im-

pious deed which that individual himself had been guilty of. A sin or crime which may seem very old will eventually work itself out and the person will fall. This sin has frequently been committed at the height of prosperity and wealth. To Aeschylus our conduct is subject to a law of retribution and this law operates through a succession of fathers and children.

It is the Orestea story which Eugene O'Neill has selected as the basis for his drama, and this powerful theme is given to us by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Each of these Greek dramatists offers a different handling of the theme, and since it is found in Aeschylus in the form of the trilogy which O'Neill follows, I shall regard his dramas first. As this trilogy opens with the "Agamemnon" there is told something of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra the father and mother of Orestes and Electra. We see the murder of Agamemnon by his wife in this opening part and we also learn of Aegisthus, who has been the lover of Clytemnestra. In this division the son and daughter do not appear at all, but in the second part of the trilogy, the "Choephorae", Orestes has returned to his native land in order to avenge the death of his father. He had been commissioned by the word of Apollo to bring about this revenge which means that he must murder his own mother. Orestes does murder both his mother and her lover, but his crime was too revolting in its nature to go unpunished, and Aeschylus shows him to us as pursued by the dread Furies. Electra also is seen in this division, but her part is small except for the fact that she does all in her power to inform her brother of the situation at the palace so that

he may accomplish his act of vengeance. The third part of the trilogy, the "Eumenides", shows Orestes still pursued, clinging to the altar of Apollo and asking for mercy. Jove, the father of Apollo, had given a divine sanction to the deed of Orestes and thus the latter has come to the Delphic temple as a place of refuge from the tormenting Furies. These dread creatures try to seize him, but Apollo intervenes and it is decided that a trial shall be held with the goddess Athena presiding. The vote at the trial results in a tie, but Athena casts her vote for Orestes and he is judged not guilty. The Furies are enraged because they had had the right to punish, but Athena argues with them and they become softened and gracious and in the future temper their justice with mercy. This ends the Orestes theme as it is dealt with in the trilogy of Aeschylus.

This same story was handled by Euripides but not in the form of a trilogy. We have his two plays, "Electra" and "Orestes", which it will be well to regard for the handling of the story. In the "Electra" we have the Euripidean interpretation of the second part of the trilogy. This drama opens with a review of the past events in the family as told by Auturgus, the husband of Electra who is far beneath her in nobility of rank. Their marriage had been brought about by Aegisthus, who feared that if Electra married a man of high rank she might arouse his desire for vengeance for the murder of her father. Orestes and his friend, Pylades, appear and after first concealing their identity from Electra, they are recognized by the old tutor who had them in charge as children. Again we have a review of the crimes in the

house and Orestes seeks a way to avenge his father which he has been sternly commanded by Apollo to do. Through the help of the old tutor, it is suggested that Orestes and Pylades approach Aegisthus, who is sacrificing to the Nymphs at a place close at hand. Orestes goes to Aegisthus, and while pretending to help with the sacrifice, he slays the lover of his mother. This deed accomplished, it becomes necessary to devise a plan for the murder of the mother, Clytemnestra. It is very important to note here that Electra takes the lead from this point and directs the course of Orestes. She thinks of a plan whereby the old tutor shall go to the Queen and tell her that Electra has given birth to a son and request her to come in order to perform certain rites. Then when she comes, she will be completely in their power. This appears to us as we read it to be a terrible scheme, and it had the same affect upon Orestes. He had killed Aegisthus without a qualm, but he feels that Clytemnestra is his mother and Electra's and he can hardly bring himself to do the deed. He speaks of the charge of Apollo as "wild and rash"[1], and he feels that he will not be pure if he murders his mother. During all of this hesitation Electra urges him on constantly, almost taunting the weakening of his courage and reminding him of the charge of Apollo and the murder of his father. We see the final feelings of Orestes as he enters the house to perform the murder of his mother.

> The house I enter. Dreadful the intent;
> Dreadful shall be my deeds. If such your will,
> Ye heavenly powers, so let it be; to me
> A bitter, yet a pleasing task assigned.[2]

The murder is committed and Clytemnestra implores pity from her children at the very moment when the sword is raised to slay her.

1. Everyman, ed., The "Plays of Euripides" I. 186
2. Ibid. I. 186-7

When the awful crime is over, both Electra and Orestes realize the horror of it and the ban that will be put upon them for the remainder of their lives. Even the Chorus asks how Electra could have borne such a sight, and she reproaches herself for having urged her brother to the deed and for having touched the sword herself. At that moment Castor and Pollux appear and the children implore their assistance and ask the reason for all of these terrible deeds and crimes in their family. These divinities urge Orestes to give Electra in marriage to Pylades and then to leave Argos for Athens, where he may be protected by the mighty Pallas Athena from the Furies who will pursue him. Thus the drama ends with the laments of Orestes and Electra that they must be exiled and forever separated from each other after they have just been reunited.

In the "Orestes" of Euripides the son is pursued by the Furies and he is still in Argos under the care of Electra who tries to protect him from the awful frenzies which come upon him from time to time. The drama opens on the day in which the Argive state is to decide the fate of the two, and their only hope is that Menelaus, the brother of Agamemnon and husband of Helen, who has just arrived will be able to help them. Helen and her daughter, Hermione are both there in the palace. Orestes asks Menelaus to plead for them before the state, but Menelaus tells him that it would be folly to try to oppose the sentiment of the people and therefore Orestes decides to go to the people himself and plead. He is assisted by Pylades who has remained his faithful friend throughout all the trouble. His plea is not granted and it seems

that he and Electra must kill themselves as the final penalty. However, Pylades suggests that before they die they think of some plan by which they may be able to bring trouble to Menelaus; and the idea of killing Helen presents itself to them. In order to protect themselves, should Menelaus attempt to take revenge, Electra suggests that they hold as a hostage Helen's daughter, Hermione. Thus they could threaten to kill her if Menelaus attempted to harm them. Menelaus does come and threatens revenge and Orestes tells him to go and persuade the Argive people to let them live. Menelaus curses Orestes and then the god, Apollo intervenes and bids him cease his rage. We then learn that Apollo had saved Helen from the sword of Orestes and taken her to heaven. Apollo tells Orestes to spend one year in Parrhasia's plains and from thence go to Athens and implore the Furies to acquit him of his mother's murder. Hermione is decreed by the gods to be his wife and Electra is to be the wife of Pylades. Menelaus is to return to his rule at Sparta and Apollo promises to appease the state so that Orestes may rule when the gods have judged his cause to be just. All are united in peace and this drama ends with a beautiful speech by Apollo telling of Helen.

> Go then your ways, now go, and reverence peace,
> Most beauteous of the gods. I will conduct
> Th' immortal Helen to the house of Jove
> O'er yon star-spangled sky, to the bright seats
> Where, with the majestic Juno, and the bloom
> Of Hebe ever young, Alcides' joy,
> A goddess she shall hear the vows of mortals;
> And honoured with the twin-born sons of Jove
> Guide the tost mariners, and rule the sea.[1]

1. Everyman, ed., The "Plays of Euripides" I. 243

Thus we have the story as Euripides tells it and now we come to the last of the interpretations--that of Sophocles.

In the works of Sophocles we only have one drama dealing with this family and it is called "Electra". The character of the sister here is a little nearer to Aeschylus' Electra and we see Orestes again as more of a leader than he was in Euripides. The plan as the drama opens is for the old guardian of Orestes to go to the palace and announce the death of Orestes in a chariot race. We next see Electra who is in great grief over her father's death and the present conditions. Her one hope is that Orestes will come. Electra talks with her sister, Chrysothemis, who has no such grief as hers. Right in the midst of her sorrow the previously mentioned old guardian enters and tells the false tale of how Orestes, at the height of his youth and skill has been killed in a chariot race. Clytemnestra triumphs openly because the return of her son was her one dread and now the last obstacle to her happiness seemed to have been removed. On the contrary, this news was a sad blow to Electra who realizes that it will probably mean her downfall as she now has no one upon whom she can place any hope. As she is lamenting Chrysothemis comes and tells her that she has been to the tomb of Agamemnon and there she has found offerings and the locks of a young man's hair. She believes that it is Orestes who has been there, but Electra tells her that their brother is dead and so it could not have been he who visited the tomb. Orestes and Pylades themselves then enter and ask for Aegisthus. Orestes shows sympathy for the wretched state of Electra and then he discloses that the whole story concerning his death is only

feigned. As they rejoice the old guardian appears and urges Orestes to the task of killing his mother as she is now alone. He does perform the deed in spite of the pleas of his mother and when Aegisthus, who has been away returns, Electra meets him and at first seems to wish to please him, a thing which she has not done previously. He expresses a desire to see Clytemnestra and her corpse is disclosed to him. He realizes that the stranger in the palace is Orestes and he wishes to be allowed to speak before he is killed. Electra urges Orestes to perform the deed at once and not hesitate, and Aegisthus is forced to cross the threshold of the very room where Agamemnon was killed. Orestes slays him and the drama ends with the feeling that the curse upon Atreus' race is gone and a new freedom has been procured. Thus we have the Sophocles version of the drama of the race of Tantalus.

The previous summaries have given the brief facts of the Orestea theme as it is presented by the Greeks. It will be well to regard the characters of the different dramas in order to see their similarities and differences. Keeping in mind the fact that our study in the Greek is later to be joined with our study of the O'Neill, it will not be necessary to dwell as fully with Agamemnon as with his son and daughter. Only in Aeschylus do we see the father alive, and there he is presented as a conquering warrior. He was a very brave man and was regarded very highly as a ruler by the Argive state. However, in the Aeschylus drama we are not interested in Agamemnon as an individual so much as we are interested in him as a universal type of soldier mind.

He possessed some tender feelings and if asked, he would doubtless have sworn of his love for his family; but the war lust in him was so strong that it carried away all of his gentleness and he was able to sacrifice his own daughter in order to transport the army to Troy. This same element in his nature led him to the complete destruction of Troy. It was true that he had been commissioned to punish the Trojans, but this could have been done without such total annihilation as he brought about. He was also presumptuous in assuming almost the liberties of a god by treading the purple cloth. We call all of these things crimes and yet Agamemnon is in no way an inherently wicked person who would plot to do evil to others. He committed these sins at the height of his prosperity and although they appear to go unpunished for a time, they eventually reach a climax. The fall of Agamemnon results primarily from a defect of his own nature. Also it is to be borne in mind that his whole line of ancestors had been guilty of dreadful crimes and violences for centuries and his house was stained by things too terrible to escape.

We look now at the character of Clytemnestra who appears in the works of all three of the dramatists. She is painted as an evil person by all of them and no effort is made to conceal her open love for Aegisthus even while Agamemnon was still living. Her murder of her husband and the cold-blooded manner in which she acts is clearly told. She does not make any attempt to conceal the fact that she did the deed. She expresses no sorrow and no excitement and her manner can almost be expressed as

one of exultation. Her marriage with Aegisthus follows right upon the heels of her husband's murder and she seems to live in comparative happiness and security. Her treatment of her two children is scarcely human. She upbraids Electra for her constant grieving, and she readily joins Aegisthus in any plan which he has for keeping Electra out of the way. Also we cannot forget her outward triumph in the Sophocles drama at the time of the announcement of what she believes to be the death of Orestes. It seems that the last barrier has been torn down and she can enjoy life without a foreboding. It would seem from these previous statements that Clytemnestra could not have possessed a single admirable trait, and yet, we feel a certain sympathy for her. It would not be difficult for us to feel what it must have meant to her to have her own child sacrificed by the father. We cannot go so far as to say that this would justify her affair with Aegisthus or the murder of Agamemnon. There was not a justification for these deeds, and it is particularly difficult to reconcile her love for the sacrificed daughter, Iphigenia, with her later feelings and actions toward Electra which could be called by no other name than hatred. However, this hatred may be said to be due to the fact that Clytemnestra realized that she was being subjected to constant censure by her daughter and thus all human, natural feelings were driven away. There is a certain sympathy felt for her in all of the dramas when Orestes prepares to murder her in revenge for his father's death. Even if it is not exactly sympathy that is felt at her death, yet there does come

a realization of the horror of the situation when children actually take up the sword and slay their own mother. She is a wonderful and an awe-inspiring character in all of the dramas and she becomes almost as interesting in the complexity of her nature as Orestes and Electra in their reactions to the family crimes.

The next step in this brief character analysis is concerned with the second generation of the family and the character of Orestes. In both Aeschylus and Sophocles he is seen returning to his home with a command from Apollo to avenge his father's death. This Orestes kills both his mother and Aegisthus, and although he realizes that he has performed a terrible deed, he feels that he has obeyed the divine order. However, it is the Orestes of Euripides who holds the attention most closely. This Greek dramatist shows the unhesitating manner in which Orestes set about the murder of Aegisthus and his triumph at the success of the act. But when it came to the murder of his mother, he hesitated and when, goaded by Electra, he did slay her, it was with a terrible sense of blood-shed and dread which led to his frenzy. Orestes is a very interesting character and is in no wise a coward. He knew that he had to avenge the death of his father and yet it was a terrible crime for him to kill his own mother to accomplish this revenge. He was brave and was led by divine sanction and therefore we are glad when he is finally granted peace at the end of all three dramas. The Greek does not make the character of Orestes particularly complex and

there is the feeling that he acts from a sincere sense of duty not to one particular case, but to the Greek idea of a family honor.

From the standpoint of the study of the O'Neill drama, Electra is the character to be most carefully observed. It has already been mentioned that her part in the Aeschylus drama is not an active one. This does not mean that Aeschylus does not make her effective, it simply means that she is merely seen in great distress over her father's death and as ready to commend Orestes for committing any crimes to avenge this death. But again turning to Euripides there is found an Electra who is still grieving, but who is much more intense and dynamic. Her hatred for her mother is even more acute here than in Aeschylus and Sophocles, and her manner of urging Orestes to the murder of their mother has already been stated. In Euripides also Electra actually witnessed the murder and she tells that she touched the very sword. In Aeschylus she does not regret her mother having been slain and in Sophocles she bears this same attitude, but in Euripides she feels with Orestes the horror of the deed and the result that it will have upon their lives. She does not even understand how she can have urged her brother to such a deed. It is difficult to see how a daughter could bear such hatred toward her mother and Clytemnestra tells that Electra always had been favorable to her father. This hatred can only be accounted for by the fact that Electra knew of her mother's relations with Aegisthus, and she could not conceive of

any excuse at all for actions such as her mother's had been. Electra stands out clearly defined in Euripides particularly and is a most interesting character. Again there is sympathy felt for her, and yet she cannot go without censure particularly in Euripides because of the tremendous force of her hatred.

Having made a survey of the characters, the next step will be to observe the manner in which these Greek dramatists have handled the outcome of the story. Among the three the idea is found most completely worked out in Aeschylus and this was because he used the trilogy form. It has been mentioned previously that this permitted him to reconcile two mutually antagonistic ideas and he does this very successfully. At the end of the trilogy Orestes gains peace and the great goddess of wisdom persuades the Furies to become gracious. This brings the belief which Aeschylus held that an individual becomes vindictive if he follows the law of retribution too closely, for Aeschylus pleads for a milder justice. This author saw a finer ideal than blood vengeance which in reality is not justice at all. In Clytemnestra there is the embodiment of this vindictive evil and fury. The Furies believe that if Orestes is not punished, the whole foundation for morality will be destroyed. Athena brings forth the Christian ideal of mercy and the drama ends with the transforming of the Furies into gracious powers. In Euripides and Sophocles there is no trilogy, but it is probable that had all of their works been preserved,

we might have had such a form from them also. However, in their dramas there is the same idea of peace at the end. These Greek dramas are wonderful pieces of literature for two main reasons. First of all they are universal in quality both in the handling of character and in the problem to be solved. Secondly, along with their almost overwhelming dignity and beauty, there comes a rationality in the solutions of the most harassing of human problems. These dramas are never morbid, nor do they even border on the morbid. It is not to be thought that the Greek ever dodged the issue or begged the question. His problem was met and solved and if the end were tragic it was due to inevitable circumstances just as are present in the Orestea theme. It is taught here that when we commit a sin we become entangled in a chain of circumstances which cannot be broken. Events are linked to events and deeds will follow in due sequence. Thus, we must regard justice and the moral laws because the man who attempts to dictate to himself is riding to his ruin. It is better to live a blameless obscure life than to be famous and be punished for sins. This concludes a study of the Orestea theme as it is handled by these three Greek dramatists. It is a powerful theme and is capable of many interpretations.

CHAPTER II

O'NEILL'S "MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA" -- A SUMMARY

The Orestea theme as handled by the classical dramatists has already been regarded, and it will now be necessary to consider the interpretation which Eugene O'Neill gives of this rich theme. I shall set down in detail this modern handling of the plot so that the similarities and differences with regard to the Greek can be shown more clearly. Therefore I shall undertake to summarize Mr. O'Neill's drama in its three parts, taking first the first division of his trilogy which is called "The Homecoming". We are going to deal with the members of the Mannon family in this first section and among these characters are Ezra Mannon, a Brigadier-General and also a Judge. Then there is Christine Mannon, his wife, and Lavinia Mannon, their daughter. We are also interested in Captain Adam Brant of the clipper "Flying Trades" and Captain Peter Niles of the Artillery and Hazel Niles, his sister. The minor characters are composed of Seth Beckwith, a gardner and caretaker at the Mannon home, and several of his friends. In Act One the drama opens with a conversation between Seth and his friends in which something is told of the Mannon family. This family has been very wealthy from the time of Abe Mannon, who made a great deal of money in shipping and started a very successful shipping and packet line. The drama takes place at the end of the Civil War and Seth refers to Ezra Mannon as "the best fighter in the hull of Grant's army".[1]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill p. 20

Seth's friends then speak of Christine Mannon who is apparently disliked by the town people. It is then suggested that there is a skeleton in the Mannon closet and this is referred to as the marriage between Abe Mannon's brother, David and a French Canuck nurse girl. Lavinia or Vinnie, as she is sometimes called, is then introduced along with Peter Niles who has been a friend for quite some time and who wishes to marry Vinnie. Lavinia puts off Peter's proposal of marriage and he accuses her of being in love with Adam Brant which she vehemently denies. She states that her mother had met Brant at her father's home in New York, but that she herself cares nothing for him. Peter then leaves and after some conversation with her mother, Lavinia is warned by Seth concerning Adam Brant whom Seth maintains is the son of the Canuck nurse girl and David Mannon. At first Vinnie will not believe this, but Seth urges her to make certain in order that she may protect her father from any intentions that Brant might have. Just at the end of this conversation Brant enters and we feel that he may love Lavinia especially when he refers to a previous night when they had walked in the moonlight. After a few moments Lavinia takes Seth's advice and openly accuses him of being David Mannon's son. She is appalled when she learns that he really is the son of David and Marie Brantôme, the nurse girl who had recently died after asking Ezra Mannon for some money to aid her in her starving condition. Brant has sworn to avenge his mother's death upon Ezra.

Act Two opens with a meeting between Lavinia and her mother which takes place in Ezra Mannon's study. Lavinia tells that while her mother was away, she, who had pretended to visit Peter and Hazel, had really gone to New York. Her mother had said that she was going there in order to visit her sick father. Lavinia had suspected her mother and consequently had followed her. She tells her mother that she saw her meet Brant, go to his room and there declare her love for him. Christine confesses that she loves him and hates her husband whom she has despised ever since their marriage. Lavinia then states that she will not disclose any of this to her father if her mother will promise to give up Brant and become a faithful wife. This is not such a shock to Christine as might be expected, because she feels that if her husband publicly casts her out, she can go with Brant. However, Lavinia plays her winning card by reminding Christine that because of his position in the shipping trade, Ezra would have Brant blacklisted so that he would lose his ship and never get another command. Finally Christine agrees to give up Adam Brant and Vinnie warns her to be very careful as she has already written to her father and brother telling them of Brant's attentions. Lavinia then leaves and Adam enters. Christine tells him that her daughter knows of their relations. In the course of the ensuing conversation Christine tells how she had yearned for her husband to be killed in the war and it is obvious that she is forming in

her mind a plot for taking his life. She tells Adam that her husband has written complaining of a case of very slight heart trouble and she has caused a rumor of this to be spread throughout the town. She then suggests that if he died suddenly everyone would suspect that it was from heart disease. Christine then gives Adam a slip of paper and asks him to go to a druggist down by the water front and get her what is written upon the paper. Brant is rather shocked, but Christine insists that no one will know, because Ezra is taking medicine and she can give him the poison instead and blame the heart attack upon the excitement of his homecoming. Then the boom of a cannon is heard and they realize that it is a salute on the return of Ezra and they must part especially before Lavinia comes back. At the end of the act, Christine is in a state of exultant excitement and she appears to us as very sinister.

Act Three brings the return of Ezra Mannon. The husband, wife, and daughter sit upon the steps to talk and Ezra tells them that he has not gotten leave for Orin, the son, because the latter has been wounded in the war. He had developed brain fever and was then resting at a hospital from which he would be discharged soon. Recalling the events of the previous act, it is interesting to hear Lavinia ask her father about his heart. He tells that it is not serious at all and does not seem to wish to discuss it and the subject is changed. Lavinia then turns to the topic of Adam Brant and Christine is defiant enough to state that his purpose in com-

ing there was to see Vinnie. The daughter then leaves and Christine in a manner which seems to be very frank asks Ezra of what he suspects her. He tells her that he merely thinks that she has been foolish to give people the opportunity for gossip. Christine succeeds in blinding him completely and then they have a conversation in which Ezra refers to the barrier that has always existed between them. He pleads for her love again and asks her to help him smash this wall between them. Lavinia comes out upon the porch, and Christine planning carefully tells Ezra that she does love him. Lavinia feels that Christine is stealing her father's love from her, and after her father has entered the house, she calls aloud with the intention of telling him about her mother. However, when the shutter is opened and her father leans out, she cannot bring herself to tell him.

Ezra Mannon's bedroom appears in Act Four of this first section of the trilogy. As the act opens, Christine has just arisen from bed at dawn. She stands very quietly for a while as if listening and then her husband speaks to her. Their conversation is very strange and rather bitter and Ezra tells Christine that he has a queer feeling. She immediately asks him if it is his heart and he accuses her of waiting for his death to set her free. He tells her that she has always made him appear a beast in his own eyes and

that he had hoped that his homecoming would mark a new beginning and a new love. Christine becomes very much excited and at first starts to argue, but then a change comes over her as if she has made up her mind to follow a fixed course of action; and she begins to torment him by telling of the disgust that she has always felt for him. Ezra in turn grows furiously angry but endeavors to calm himself because he realizes that this excitement will bring on a heart attack. However, Christine keeps on in her coldly taunting way and it is plain that she has determined to arouse him to such an extent as to bring on an attack. She tells him who Adam Brant really is and that she has gone to New York frequently to be with him and not to see her father as she had pretended. By these remarks Ezra is aroused to a frenzy of rage and he struggles to arise from the bed. This brings on a very severe attack and when Christine sees this, she silently slips into her own room and then silently steals back carrying a small box. Her husband gasps for his medicine and as she slips a pellet from the box into her hand, she asks him where the medicine is. He indicates the small stand in the room and Christine, pretending to take something from the stand, gives him the pellet with a glass of water. As soon as Ezra has swallowed the pellet, he realizes that it is not his medicine and he calls in a whisper for Vinnie and then sinks

back in a state of coma. All of this time Christine has watched him and has placed the box in back of her on the stand. However, she snatches up the box again as the door opens and Lavinia enters. She hurries to her father's side and with a last effort he raises himself up, points at his wife and gasps that she is guilty. He then falls back dead. Lavinia turns upon her mother and asks what he meant by the accusation and she answers that he forced her to tell that Adam was her lover. Lavinia is horrified and tells her mother that she meant to kill him. All of this time Christine has been controlling herself with a great effort, but finally she faints and the box which she has been tightly clutching in her hand, falls to the floor. When Christine falls, Lavinia goes to her but when she sees that her mother has only fainted she again accuses her and vows that she will punish her. As she rises, her eyes light upon the box and she looks at it with a horrified expression. This act ends with a beseeching cry from Lavinia to her father asking for help.

Part Two of the trilogy is called "The Hunted" and it opens with the time just two days after the murder of Ezra Mannon. In the beginning there is a conversation between some of the villagers as they come away from the Mannon home. After they have left, Christine comes out upon the porch of the house and is soon followed by Hazel Niles who tells that Vinnie and Peter have gone to the train to meet

Orin Mannon, the son. Mrs. Mannon tells Hazel that Lavinia will try to keep Orin from marrying her and she promises to help her. They enter the house together and immediately Vinnie and Peter return bringing Orin who is at once struck by the ghostly and tomb-like appearance of the house. As Peter enters the house and the brother and sister are left alone, Orin asks Lavinia about Adam Brant of whom she had written him and he expresses a hatred for him. Just before Christine comes out, Vinnie warns Orin to be on his guard against his mother and not let her baby him the way she had done formerly. She also warns him against the lies Christine will tell him and she begs him not to make any judgments until he has talked to her at greater length. A stop is then put to the conversation by the entrance of the mother who greets Orin very affectionately and leads him into the house. A few moments later she reappears in order to speak to Vinnie who still stands by the steps. The hatred between the mother and daughter is very marked, but Christine endeavors to speak in a way more kindly persuasive than usual. As she talks she becomes frightened at the manner in which her daughter stares at her and she asks her if she found a little box of medicine after she had fainted the night of Ezra's death. Lavinia does not utter a word, but Christine knows that she is silently accusing her of administering poison. She tells Vinnie that she realizes that it is her plan to inform Orin of her suspicions and get him to go to the police. Vinnie will not give

her mother the satisfaction of any answer and moves away slowly. As Orin's voice is heard calling, Christine re-enters the house.

In Act Two Peter, Hazel, Christine, and Orin are seated in the sitting room where Orin seems to have forgotten all suspicions of his mother. Yet he feels a queer atmosphere and says he believes that his father will always be there. With this feeling a kind of suspicion returns and he tells his mother that she looks different. In the midst of the conversation Orin is called by Lavinia to come and look at their father. He is about to go with her but Christine asks him to stay a while. Orin hesitates still somewhat suspicious of his mother, and she in return endeavors to appear very calm. Peter and Hazel leave and Christine, left alone in the room with Orin, knows that she must now face the interview. After a few rather angry remarks, Orin bluntly asks her who this Brant is who has been calling on her. Christine again pretends, as she did upon Ezra's return, that Brant has been coming to see Vinnie and that Vinnie had merely made up lies in order to estrange her from the rest of the family. Christine then refers to the former pleasant times that she and Orin had had together when they seemed to live in a little world of their own. She next tells that she believes that Vinnie is really insane and for a time was really in love with Brant. She accounts

for Brant's real interests in coming there by saying that he wished to use the influence of Ezra Mannon in order to get a better ship. Christine states that Vinnie in her insane suspicions has worked out the idea that Brant is the son of David Mannon and the nurse girl, Marie Brantôme. As another example of Vinnie's beliefs, Christine tells Orin that her daughter has accused her of going to New York to meet Brant and also of poisoning Ezra. She pretends to be very much frightened and Orin expresses his love for her saying that he would forgive anything but the Brant affair, and if he ever found that to be true, he would kill Brant. Christine is, of course, very frightened. Lavinia again comes to bid Orin to go and see their father and as he does go, the mother and daughter are again left together. Christine tells Lavinia that she has told Orin all of the lies made up by Vinnie about her, and she warns her not to go too far. Then suddenly her defiance vanishes and she begs Vinnie not to tell Orin of Adam, and as Vinnie leaves the room, Christine's uppermost thought is to warn Adam.

In Act Three there is heard first a conversation between Lavinia and Orin in which there is told something of Orin's feelings since the war. Orin then accuses his sister of telling lies about their mother and Vinnie tells him that if he will not listen to her, she will go to the police as a last resort since she possesses absolute proofs to base her accusations upon. She openly accuses her mother of murder and

shows Orin the box which she found in the room after the murder. When Orin wavers, she taunts him by referring to him as a baby and he is stung by her reproaches. When she sees the hold that her mother has upon him, she appeals to him to at least punish Captain Brant who got the poison for Christine. Still she cannot make Orin believe that Brant is her mother's lover, but he promises to believe it when he sees them together. Just then Christine comes to the door and before she enters, Vinnie places the box on her father's body. Orin seems to feel his mother's guilt as soon as she enters the room. When Christine's eyes light upon the box placed upon the corpse, she screams and Orin stumbles from the room as Lavinia takes the box and leaves also. Christine's thoughts are for the safety of Adam and she even appeals to her dead husband not to let Vinnie or Orin harm Adam Brant.

In Act Four the scene has shifted to a wharf in East Boston to which is moored a clipper ship. A drunken old Chantyman is singing and mumbling as he moves along the wharf, and soon a door opens on the deck of the clipper and Brant cautiously steps out. In a few moments Christine appears and tells Brant that something must be done because Vinnie knows that her father has been poisoned. She says that the only reason that she is able to leave home is because Vinnie and Orin have gone to visit some cousins. They then disappear into the cabin and Orin and Vinnie stealthily

come upon the deck. Brant and Christine are again heard as the former expresses his regret for not having openly met and fought Ezra Mannon. Christine begs him to go away and take her with him and he says he will try to get them passage on a ship sailing for China. Christine prepares to leave and Brant walks to the end of the wharf with her. Orin and Lavinia then come out of hiding and wait for the return of Brant. As he appears, Orin fires at him and kills him. He and his sister then pry open drawers, and go through the pockets of the dead man in order to make it look like a robbery. Lavinia then hurries Orin away so that no one will come and see them there. Orin has seen his mother there and overheard her conversation with Brant so that there are no longer any suspicions as to her relations with him.

In Act Five Christine has sent for Hazel to be with her as Vinnie and Orin have not yet returned. Hazel offers to stay all night with her and leaves for just a few moments in order that she may let her mother know where she is. Immediately Orin and Vinnie appear and Orin tells his mother that they have not been to their cousin's home, but have been to Boston where they met the night train upon which she arrived. He then tells that they followed her to the boat, listened to the conversation and then killed Brant. Christine is terrified and does not believe that Orin can be telling her the truth, but he shows her a newspaper which tells of the death of Brant as apparently caused by thieves. Christine seems to

grow numb with grief and Orin again feels pity for her and begs her to forget Brant and try to be happy. Lavinia recalls him to himself and he enters the house. Christine then seems to come to herself and with a terrible look she rushes into the house where she kills herself. Orin rushes to her but it is too late and he immediately feels that he has murdered her because he told her that he had killed Brant instead of letting her think that thieves had done it. Lavinia tries to comfort him, and as the second part of the trilogy ends, we hear her tell Seth that her mother has killed herself in a fit of grief over the father's death.

The last part of the trilogy is called "The Haunted" and when the first act opens Seth is again found with a group of his friends standing just outside the Mannon house which shows itself to be unoccupied by the closed shutters and boarded up doors. These people believe the house to be haunted by all the dead members of the Mannon family. All of the group assembled believe this with the exception of one named Small, and Seth bets this man ten dollars and a jug of whiskey that he will not go into the house and remain there until moonrise at ten o'clock. Although somewhat frightened, Small does enter the house but very soon comes rushing out swearing that he has seen Ezra's ghost dressed as a judge. Just at that time Peter and Hazel Niles come and tell Seth that they have just received a telegram from Vinnie and Orin who have landed in New York, and they have come to open up the house for them. Seth's friends disperse and Seth tells Hazel

and Peter that he has let Small into the house on purpose in order that he might stop the gossip in the town about the house being haunted. Peter agrees that it would be a good thing to put a stop to all such beliefs but Seth tells him that there has been a strange atmosphere connected with the house ever since it was built in hate. He feels that there is something evil about it which has kept growing and has culminated in the horrors of Ezra's and Christine's death. It is then told that immediately after the death of Christine, Vinnie had hurried Orin off to the Far East for a trip. Hazel and Peter enter the house and in a few moments Lavinia and Orin appear coming up the drive. Instantly a change in Lavinia can be noticed. She has filled out and looks very much more like her mother in grace and beauty. She leads her brother up to the house and forces him to look at it calmly, insisting that there are no ghosts and that the dead have forgotten them. Orin still seems to feel his mother's presence there, but finally Vinnie coaxes him into the house.

In Scene Two of Act One we are once again in the house and Vinnie is talking to Orin and is trying to make him face the past bravely. He seems at times to obey her in a lifeless, mechanical fashion, and at other times he acts very strangely and seems to have become morbid and brooding with the idea that he was responsible for his mother's death. Soon Peter enters and is very much amazed at the change in

Lavinia's appearance. Orin speaks to Peter and in a rather jeering way tells how they stopped at the Islands on the way back and how Vinnie seemed to like the Islanders and their romantic ways. Then Orin goes to find Hazel and Vinnie tells Peter of the queer way in which Orin has acted. Peter offers to help her and again expresses his love for her which she now accepts. Orin and Hazel enter as they are embracing and Orin seems filled with a jealous rage as he sees them.

In Act Two Orin appears writing in his father's study. As Lavinia knocks on the door he hastily puts his writing into the drawer and locks it. After a very strange and angry talk, Orin tells his sister that he is writing the history of their family in which he is telling all of the crimes in the family even their's which he has been trying to account for by tracing it to the evil destiny in their lives. He calls Vinnie the most interesting of all the criminals and he accuses her of liking the officer of the ship that they had been on just as their mother had loved Brant. He also accuses her of love for one of the Island men and he tells her that she is plotting some scheme to get him out of the way. Orin threatens her and says that he will not allow her to leave him for Peter, and if she tries to do this, he will put the written confession of their family into safe hands. Lavinia, sobbing, goes from the room and Orin turns again to his writing.

Act Three shows Peter and Hazel Niles coming to the Mannon

home, and as they talk Hazel tells that she feels that something is wrong about the house and she is going to try to get Orin to come and visit them for a while. Peter has to leave and Orin enters, but then leaves in order to get a large sealed envelope which he gives to Hazel telling her not to let Vinnie see it and to give it to Peter the day before the wedding, if he and Vinnie go on with the plans of their marriage. Lavinia enters and refuses to let Orin go to stay with Hazel. The latter rises in anger, and in so doing forgets to hide the envelope from Vinnie. Vinnie begs Orin to make Hazel give up the envelope and she promises that she will do anything if he will get it back. He does get it back and after Hazel leaves, he makes Lavinia promise to give up Peter. Lavinia finally becomes so upset that she tells Orin that he would kill himself if he were not a coward. He seems rather possessed by this idea and he goes out as Peter enters, saying that he must go and clean his pistol. Lavinia rushes to Peter and tells, almost hysterically, how wonderful it will be when they are married. A shot is heard from the study and Peter rushes in to find Orin. Vinnie hides the envelope and turning to the Mannon pictures on the walls she says that she is through with them and will live in spite of them because she is her mother's daughter.

Act Four brings us to the Mannon home again three days later. Lavinia has the same appearance that she had in the

beginning of the play and she looks thin and haggard. She tells Seth that she is going to marry Peter Niles and close up the house until the very pictures of the Mannons rot on the walls. As they are talking Hazel Niles comes and at first accuses Vinnie of driving Orin to his death. She feels that terrible things have happened in the house and that Lavinia is to blame for them. However, she relates that her main purpose in coming is to ask Lavinia not to marry Peter and not to drag him into whatever terrible thing overshadows their house. Hazel feels that something would always come between them and that already Peter has quarreled with his mother over Lavinia and left home. When Hazel sees that Lavinia is determined to marry Peter, she tells her that she should at least let Peter read what was written in the envelope. Just then her brother appears and she slips out toward the back of the house. Peter greets Lavinia and tells her how glad he will be to marry her and get away from the town. Vinnie asks Peter to swear that he will not suspect her of anything and will not let any one come in between them. She begs him to marry her immediately and he becomes a little suspicious in spite of himself, and asks if there was anything in what Orin wrote that would keep them from marrying. Lavinia works herself up into a high pitch of excitement and calls the name of Adam quite unconsciously. She seems to feel that the dead will always come in between them and that there is no use trying to escape them. Peter is bewildered when

she tells him that she cannot marry him because the dead are too strong to permit love to her. Peter asks if something that Orin wrote drove her to this decision, and he recalls to her what Orin had said about the native on the Island in whom she had been so interested. At first Vinnie denies this vehemently, but then she tells him that she will not lie to him any longer and will tell him frankly that she has had relations with the Islander. Peter is repelled with horror and hurries off with the last words that she must be bad at heart and that it is no wonder that Orin killed himself. When Peter leaves, Lavinia starts after him, but then turns as if ready to enter the house. Old Seth appears and she tells him that she must punish herself and she is going to do this by entering the house and living with the dead. She swears never to go out, never to see any one, and to have the shutters nailed in order to even keep out the sunlight. As she goes in and closes the door, she shows her feelings by the following comment.

> I'll live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die. I know they will see to it I live for a long time! It takes the Mannons to punish themselves for being born.[1]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 256

CHAPTER III

THE INFLUENCE OF THE TECHNIQUE OF THE GREEK DRAMA UPON THE "MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA"

In dealing with the general characteristics of the Greek drama, it was noted that the Greek drama took place out-of-doors in a large ampitheater. It is clear that this fact influenced O'Neill in the presentation of the "Mourning Becomes Electra". Many of the scenes in the latter play take place in front of the house, either on the porch or beside a bench which is placed in the yard. Many of the scenes take place in the interior of the Mannon home, but nevertheless the outdoor scenes have a distinct atmosphere and seem to fit in with the larger atmosphere of the whole play. It was also mentioned that the Greek drama had an architectural setting as a background which was very often made up of the graceful columns of a Greek temple. In Mr. O'Neill's settings he gives in detail several pictures of the Mannon house from the outside where the temple-like appearance is stressed. This house is placed in a New England setting which would instantly call to mind the colonial columns of the New England homes. I shall regard the very first description of the house where the Greek architectural setting is distinct.

> The house is placed back on a slight rise of ground about three hundred feet from the street. It is a large building of the Greek temple type that was the vogue in the first half of the nineteenth century. A white wooden portico with six tall columns contrasts with the wall of the

> house proper which is of gray cut stone. There are five windows on the upper floor, and four on the ground floor, with the main entrance in the middle, a doorway with squared transom and side-lights flanked by intermediate columns. The window shutters are painted a dark green. Before the doorway a flight of four steps leads from the ground to the portico.[1]

Again the description preceding Act One brings out this similarity to the architectural background of the classical plays, and the Greek must have influenced O'Neill strongly in this respect.

> Behind the driveway the white Grecian temple portico with its six tall columns extends across the stage. A big pine tree is on the lawn at the edge of the drive before the right corner of the house. Its trunk is a black column in striking contrast to the white columns of the portico.... It is shortly before sunset and the soft light of the declining sun shines directly on the front of the house, shimmering in a luminous mist on the white portico and the gray stone wall behind, intensifying the whiteness of the columns, the somber grayness of the wall, the green of the open shutters, the green of the lawn and shrubbery, the black and green of the pine tree. The white columns cast black bars of shadow on the gray wall behind them. The windows of the lower floor reflect the sun's rays in a resentful glare. The temple portico is like an incongruous white mask fixed on the house to hide its somber gray ugliness.[2]

The description of the scene previous to Act Three in "The Homecoming" again stresses the appearance of the house.

> The light of a half moon falls on the house, giving it an unreal, detached, eerie quality. The pure white temple front seems more than ever like an incongruous mask fixed on the somber stone house. All the shutters are closed. The white columns of the portico cast black bars of shadow on the gray wall behind them. The trunk of the pine at right is an ebony pillar, its branches a mass of shade.[3]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 9-10
2. Ibid. P. 17
3. Ibid. P. 69

This emphasis upon the architectural background is found again in the description previous to Act One of "The Hunted".

> The house has the same strange eerie appearance, its white portico like a mask in the moonlight, as it had on that night. All the shutters are closed. A funeral wreath is fixed to the column at the right of steps. Another wreath is on the door.[1]

The last reference is made to this phase of the setting at the beginning of Act Four, the last act in the trilogy.

> Soft golden sunlight shimmers in a luminous mist on the Greek temple portico, intensifying the whiteness of the columns, the deep green of the shutters, the green of the shrubbery, the black and green of the pines. The columns cast black bars of shadow on the gray stone wall behind them. The shutters are all fastened back, the windows open. On the ground floor, the upper part of the windows, raised from the bottom, reflect the sun in a smouldering stare, as of brooding revengeful eyes.[2]

It is clear from these references that the dignity and effectiveness of the Greek temple background must have influenced O'Neill greatly. He refers to an architectural setting in the beginning of the drama and also in the middle and at the end, and this tends to give a unity of atmosphere to the play as a whole. This background becomes more than just setting because it fuses itself with the drama and almost becomes a part of the action. There is a consciousness of the stress laid upon it as the reading of the play proceeds, but yet it is a part of the strangeness of the drama and the tenseness of the characters.

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 103
2. Ibid. P. 245

It is to be recalled that the chorus played a very important rôle in the Greek drama. The Greek chorus had a very close connection with the action going on upon the stage and was never merely irrelevant to the play. Upon first thought, it would seem as though there were no part in a modern play for a Greek chorus, and while O'Neill brings no Greek chorus upon his stage, he does make use of one very important function of the old chorus. This function consisted in the telling of something about either the past or present condition of the characters. This interest in the chorus is found in the very beginning of the O'Neill drama in the group of townspeople made up of Seth Beckwith, the Mannon gardner; Amos Ames, a carpenter; Louisa Ames, his wife; and Minnie, a cousin. These people, gathered in front of the Mannon home tell something of old Abe Mannon and his wealth from the shipping business, and the scandal involving David Mannon and the Canuck nurse girl. They also tell of the position of the present Ezra Mannon and the dislike that the villagers have for Christine. A description in Act One of the "Homecoming" shows that the author must have wished to bestow this function of a chorus upon Amos Ames, Louisa, and Minnie.

> These last three are types of townsfolk rather than individuals, a chorus representing the town come to look and listen and spy on the rich and exclusive Mannons."[1]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 19

This quotation shows clearly that these people are intended to give a picture of the Mannon family just as the old Greek chorus did. In the latter there was no description of the individuals making up the chorus as there is in "Mourning Becomes Electra", but even in the detailed description of the modern play there is a similarity because Mr. O'Neill makes of these people universal types just as the Greek stressed universal qualities. The following description of these three individuals shows this very clearly.

> Amos Ames, a carpenter by trade but now taking a holiday and dressed in his Sunday best, as are his wife and her cousin, is a fat man in his fifties. In character he is the townsfolk type of garrulous gossip-monger who is at the same time devoid of evil intent, scandal being for him merely the subject most popular with his audience.[1]

> His wife, Louisa, is taller and stouter than he and about the same age. Of a similar scandal-bearing type, her tongue is sharpened by malice.[2]

> Her cousin, Minnie, is a plump little woman of forty, of the meek, eager-listener type, with a small round face, round stupid eyes, and a round mouth pursed out to drink in gossip.[3]

These people make up quite an interesting chorus. We get a clearer picture of them than we get of the Greek chorus, and yet there are typical people to be found in any age. They seem to form a background for the rest of the play.

There is a second chorus in this drama which appears in Act One of "The Hunted".

> These people--the Bordens, Hills and his wife, and Doctor Blake--are, as were the Ames of Act One of 'Homecoming', types of townsfolk, a chorus representing as those others had, but in a different

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 18-19
2. Ibid. P. 19
3. Ibid. P. 19

> stratum of society, the town as a human background for the drama of the Mannons."

These people are likewise type characters as is seen in the description given of them.

> Josiah Borden, the manager of the Mannon shipping company, is shrewd and competent. He is around sixty, small and wizened, white hair and beard, rasping nasal voice, and little sharp eyes. His wife, about ten years his junior, is a typical New England woman of pure English ancestry, with a horse face, buck teeth and big feet, her manner defensively sharp and assertive. Hills is the type of well-fed minister of a prosperous small-town congregation--stout and unctuous, snobbish and ingratiating, conscious of godliness, but timid and always feeling his way. He is in the fifties, as is his wife, a sallow, flabby, self-effacing minister's wife. Doctor Blake is the old kindly best-family physician--a stout self-important old man with a stubborn opinionated expression.[2]

The members of this second group also state that they do not like Christine Mannon, but they express more of a regard for her than ever before when they believe her to be grieving very much over the death of her husband. These people also tell that it is not really fair to pass judgment on a Mannon because they are careful not to let any one see what they really feel. A little farther on in the discussion the men tell that Christine had declined to have a large public funeral, and although they disagree with her, they feel that to some extent this does fit in with the character of Ezra who always worked in a quiet way and let the other people show off. Also in this same conversation which is quite rich in material, there is expressed the old idea which Aeschylus, in the "Orestea" was working to refute. The following speech

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 103

by Mrs. Hills where she is speaking of the suddenness of Ezra's death illustrates this idea.

> "Maybe it is fate. You remember, Everett, you've always said about the Mannons that pride goeth before a fall and that some day God would humble them in their sinful pride".[1]

This recalls the old belief that when man gets too prosperous, an envious God will cause his downfall. It is very clear that this use by O'Neill of these groups of townsfolk corresponds in some ways to the Greek use of the chorus. In two brief conversations we hear through the chorus the events in the past generations of the Mannons, the actions of the present generation, and even something of the temperament of the characters. In the "Agamemnon" of Aeschylus, it is interesting to note that the first appearance of the chorus relates the war lust of Agamemnon which later led to the sacrifice of his daughter. This also illustrates clearly the manner in which the chorus is used to give information.

> Nine years have rolled, the tenth is rolling,
> Since the strong Atridan pair,
> Menelaus and Agamemnon,
> Sceptered kings by Jove's high grace,
> With a host of sworn alliance,
> With a thousand triremes rare,
> With a righteous strong defiance,
> Sailed for Troy. From furious breast
> Loud they clanged the peal of battle;
> Like the cry of vultures wild
> O'er the lone paths fitful-wheeling,
> With their plumy oarage oaring
> Over the nest by the spoiler spoiled,
> The nest dispeopled now and bare,
> Their long but fruitless care.[2]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 106
2. Everyman Edition The "Lyrical Dramas of Aeschylus" P. 44

The chorus in O'Neill is only seen twice, but through it alone we are prepared for the drama as the author presents it. The fact that there is more action presented upon the stage of the modern play, would tend to lessen the importance of the chorus.

Again referring to the discussion dealing with the general characteristics of the Greek drama, it will be well to recall the masks worn by the Greek actors. Upon these masks were painted features representative of the individual who was being portrayed. These expressions would tend to keep the character more vividly before the audience, and Mr. O'Neill must have been deeply impressed by the effect which this would produce, because in his drama there are constant references to the mask-like faces of the characters. This trait would not only stress the family resemblance as it did do in connection with the Mannon family, but it would also emphasize a fixity of expression which would tend to produce an effect somewhat similar to the Greek. This is first introduced by the author in his first description of Christine Mannon.

> Her face is unusual, handsome rather than beautiful. One is struck at once by the strange impression it gives in repose of being not living flesh but a wonderfully life-like pale mask, in which only the deep-set eyes, of a dark, violet blue, are alive.[1]

This is stressed again in Lavinia whose face has the same mask-like quality especially when it is in repose. This

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 21-22

expression seems to be characteristic of the distinct trait of all the Mannons--that of appearing to conceal their innermost feelings except in times of great stress and excitement. In O'Neill it seems a means of stressing the strange quality of the entire Mannon family and also the persons closely connected with them. The Mannons were people who controlled their emotions with an iron will. The peculiar mask-like quality might also have resulted from the strained relations within the family itself. It might be called a mere family resemblance if it were limited to just the family, but the same quality of expression is found in Seth, the caretaker of the home. Perhaps Mr. O'Neill has used the idea of the mask in the exact manner that it was used by the Greek dramatists. The Greek manner was to have features on the mask worn by the actor which were characteristic of the individual being portrayed. The author in the modern drama may have had the mask show the queer temperament of each member of the Mannon home, and even of Seth who had been associated with the family so long that he had grown to be like them in nature. If the author had been presenting a normal family, it is not probable that he would have referred to the mask-like quality of their faces. A normal family would be more wholesome and the faces of its members would be frank and open. Therefore, it would seem that this trait in the Mannon family was due to the hostile relations in the family and the actions of its members which

were such as to cause them to conceal their true feelings. Coming to the second generation in the characters of Orin and Lavinia, the same appearance is repeated. In them it might be an inherited family resemblance, but even if this is the case, the quality was certainly strengthened by the circumstances in their lives. I should like to set down a short description of the characters in order to show how this quality is stressed, and how it fits in with the appearance of the house and the general foreboding atmosphere of mystery.

(Seth Beckwith)

> Seth Beckwith, the Mannon's gardner and man of all work, is an old man of seventy-five with white hair and beard, tall, rawboned and stoop-shouldered, his joints stiffened by rheumatism, but still sound and hale. He has a gaunt face that in repose gives one the strange impression of a life-like mask. It is set in a grim expression but his small, sharp eyes still peer at life with a shrewd prying avidity and his loose mouth has a strong suggestion of ribald humor.[1]

(Christine Mannon)

> Christine Mannon is a tall striking-looking woman of forty, but she appears younger. She has a fine voluptuous figure and she moves with a flowing animal grace. She wears a green satin dress, smartly cut and expensive, which brings out the peculiar color of her thick curly hair, partly a copper brown, partly a bronze gold, each shade distinct and yet blending with the other. Her face is unusual, handsome rather than beautiful. One is struck at once by the strange impression it gives in repose of being not living flesh but a wonderfully life-like pale mask, in which only the deep-set eyes, of a dark violet blue, are alive.[2]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 18
2. Ibid. P. 21-22

We note the affect of this strange quality of her face in the following conversation between the "chorus" of townspeople.

> Minnie (in an awed whisper). My! She's awful handsome, ain't she?
> Louisa. Too furrin lookin' fur my taste.
> Minnie. Ayeh. There's somethin' queer lookin' about her face.
> Ames. Secret lookin'--'s if it was a mask she'd put on. That's the Mannon look. They all has it. They grow it on their wives. Seth's growed it on too, didn't you notice--from bein' with 'em all his life. They don't want folks to guess their secrets.[1]

(Lavinia Mannon)

> She has the same peculiar shade of copper-gold hair, the same pallor and dark violet-blue eyes, the black eyebrows meeting in a straight line above her nose, the same sensual mouth, the same heavy jaw. Above all, one is struck by the same strange, life-like mask impression her face gives in repose.[2]

(Adam Brant)

> He starts on seeing Lavinia but immediately puts on his most polite, winning air. One is struck at a glance by the peculiar quality his face in repose has of being a life-like mask rather than living flesh.[3]

(Ezra Mannon)

> A moment later Ezra enters from left, front. He stops short in the shadow for a second and stands, erect and stiff, as if at attention, staring at his house, his wife, and daughter. He is a tall, spare, big-boned man of fifty, dressed in the uniform of a Brigadier-General. One is immediately struck by the mask-like look of his face in repose, more pronounced in him than in the others. He is exactly like the portrait in his study, which we have seen in Act Two, except that his face is more lined and lean and the hair and beard are grizzled. His movements are exact and wooden and he has a mannerism of standing and sitting in stiff, posed attitudes that suggest the statues of military heroes. When he speaks, his deep voice has a hollow repressed quality, as if he were continually withholding emotion from it. His air is brusque and authoritative.[4]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 22
2. Ibid. P. 23

(Orin Mannon)

> One is at once struck by his startling family resemblance to Ezra Mannon and Adam Brant (whose likeness to each other we have seen in 'Homecoming'). There is the same lifelike mask quality of the face in repose, the same acquiline nose, heavy eyebrows, swarthy complexion, thick straight black hair, light hazel eyes. His mouth and chin have the same general characteristics as his father's had, but the expression of his mouth gives an impression of tense over-sensitiveness quite foreign to the General's, and his chin is a refined, weakened version of the dead man's.[1]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 110-111

CHAPTER IV

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE O'NEILL DRAMA

1. CHRISTINE MANNON

Before making a direct comparison of the characters in Eugene O'Neill and in the Greek plays, it will be necessary to analyze carefully certain members of the Mannon family so that their inner natures may be more clearly understood. I should like to begin this analysis with the character of the mother, Christine Mannon, because her relations with her children are of primary importance and can be brought to light by a study of her character. From the very beginning of the drama her hatred for Lavinia is made very apparent, and her actions before her daughter are marked by wariness and suspicion. This hatred is not confined to Lavinia alone, but includes all of her surroundings which she regards with a kind of bitterness.

> (Christine casually avoiding her eyes). Yes, he's much better now. He'll soon be going the rounds to his patients again, he hopes. (As if anxious to change the subject, looking at the flowers she carries.) I've been to the greenhouse to pick these. I felt our tomb needed a little brightening. (She nods scornfully toward the house.) Each time I come back after being away it appears more like a sepulchre! The 'whited' one of the Bible--pagan temple front stuck like a mask on Puritan gray ugliness! It was just like old Abe Mannon to build such a monstrosity--as a temple for his hatred.[1]

The deep hatred between mother and daughter is very marked, and there is the feeling constantly throughout the play that the

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 31

one is constantly watching the other. This hatred seems a very abnormal thing and it is first brought out at the time of Adam Brant's appearance. Christine tries to make it appear that he is coming to court Lavinia, and the hatred between the two is clear.

> Lavinia. Is that why you picked the flowers--because he is coming? (Her mother does not answer her. She goes on with a threatening undercurrent in her voice) You have heard the news, I suppose? It means Father will be home soon!
> Christine. (Without looking at her--coolly). We've had so many rumors lately. This report hasn't been confirmed yet, has it? I haven't heard the fort firing a salute.
> Lavinia. You will before long.
> Christine. I'm sure I hope so as much as you.
> Lavinia. You can say that.[1]

Perhaps the greatest declaration of Christine's hatred is to be found in the conversation with Lavinia just before the arrival of Ezra. It is during this talk that Lavinia accuses her mother of relations with Brant. Christine is at first alarmed and then desperate when she learns that her daughter has followed her and witnessed her secret meetings. She is for the moment quite shaken by Lavinia's bitter accusations, but then she becomes defiant and openly declares her love for Adam Brant. She then tells Lavinia that she would perhaps understand this if she were married to a man whom she despised, and who had disgusted her ever since their marriage. There is then a very interesting and revealing conversation which shows this hatred.

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 32

> Christine. (bitterly) No. I loved him once--before I married him--incredible as that seems now! He was handsome in his lieutenant's uniform! He was silent and mysterious and romantic! But marriage soon turned his romance into disgust.
>
> Lavinia. (wincingagain--stammers harshly) So I was born of your disgust! I've always guessed that, Mother--ever since I was little--when I used to come to you--with love--but you would always push me away! I've felt it ever since I can remember--your disgust! (Then with a flare-up of bitter hatred) Oh, I hate you! It's only right I should hate you!
>
> Christine. (shaken--defensively) I tried to love you. I told myself it wasn't human not to love my own child, born of my body. But I never could make myself feel that you were born of any body but his! You were always my wedding night to me--and my honeymoon!
>
> Lavinia. Stop saying that! How can you be so--! (Then suddenly--with a strange jealous bitterness) You've loved Orin! Why didn't you hate him, too?
>
> Christine. Because by then I had forced myself to become resigned in order to live! And most of the time I was carrying him, your father was with the army in Mexico. I had forgotten him. And when Orin was born he seemed my child, only mine, and I loved him for that! (Bitterly) I loved him until he let you and your father nag him into the war, in spite of my begging him not to leave me alone. (Staring at Lavinia with hatred) I know his leaving me was your doing principally, Vinnie.[1]

Thus it is to be seen from the conversation just quoted that Christine's hatred for her husband grew out of a disgust which she felt for him, and her hatred for Lavinia grew out of this same feeling. We would still not consider this sufficient reason for the love of Christine for Adam Brant. She probably found in him what she had expected to find in Ezra and did not. To him she could express her feelings and her love which her disgust for Ezra had stunted early in their married life. Christine's nature seems to be very intense and her love for Brant was just as intense as her hatred for Ezra, and

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 51

yet we cannot feel much pity for her because of what seems an almost diabolical quality in her nature. This is all connected with her hatred for her daughter, because she felt that Lavinia had always tried to usurp her place.

> Christine. I know you Vinnie!. I've watched you ever since you were little, trying to do exactly what you're doing now! You've tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You've always schemed to steal my place!
>
> Lavinia. (wildly) No! It's you who have stolen all love from me since the time I was born! (Then her manner becomes threatening) But I don't want to listen to any more of your lies and excuses! I want to know right now whether you're going to do what I told you or not![1]

Christine does promise to give up Brant, but she does this so easily that it is clear that she is planning something.

In Christine's conversation with Adam Brant there is another declaration of her hatred for her husband. Her love for Adam appears to be much more intense than his love for her, and at times there appears a certain fine quality in him because of his wish to meet Ezra Mannon openly and settle his revenge. Christine works upon the emotions of Brant until she arouses his anger and she suggests that if Ezra had been killed, they might have been married and then Brant would have received his share of the estate to which he was really entitled. When Christine discloses to Brant her carefully laid plan of poisoning Ezra and using his heart trouble as an excuse, even Brant is horrified and sees the cruelty of the scheme. He feels that it is cowardly and when he hesitates, she taunts him by asking him if his love for her

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill p. 53

means nothing more than that. He is stung by this and promises to help her. After Brant leaves Christine, the exultant nature of her temperament can be noted. She seems almost like an evil spirit awaiting the tragic outcome of some dire spell which will set her free.

The next picture of Christine is that in which she appears with Lavinia just before the return of her husband. There is again repeated the hatred between the mother and daughter and the scorn with which Christine taunts Lavinia about her beauty and love. Dealing very briefly with the scenes between Ezra and Christine, it will suffice to say that there is shown again the hatred of Christine for Ezra, and the cold-bloodedness with which she poisons him is hardly conceivable. Even when Lavinia rushes into the room and accuses her of murder, she makes a last effort at defiance before her strength gives away.

The next insight into Christine's temperament is found in her contacts with her son. Her chief aim as far as Orin is concerned seems to be to convince him of her own innocence which Lavinia is so anxious to disprove. Even before Orin arrives, Christine begins her work by telling Hazel Niles that Lavinia will endeavor to prevent Orin from marrying her. She asks Hazel to help her in keeping Orin out of reach of Lavinia's influence, and Hazel does not seem to be quite able to understand all of her rather tense conversation. Christine tells Hazel that she must be genuinely good to look

at life as she does. Christine then utters a rather significant speech in which there is told a little of her philosophy.

> Christine. I was like you once--long ago--before-- (Then with bitter longing) If I could only have stayed as I was then! Why can't all of us remain innocent and loving and trusting? But God won't leave us alone. He twists and wrings and tortures our lives with others' lives until--we poison each other to death! (Seeing Hazel's look, catches herself--quickly) Don't mind what I said! Let's go in, shall we? I would rather wait for Orin inside. I couldn't bear to wait and watch him coming up the drive--just like--he looks so much like his father at times--and like--but what nonsense I'm talking! Let's go in. I hate moonlight. It makes everything so haunted.[1]

When Orin does arrive, Christine greets him very lovingly, but she is quite suspicious of what Lavinia may tell him and she is anxious to keep him to herself. However, when Orin goes into the house, Christine returns to speak to Lavinia who has remained outside. She appeals to her to remember that she is her mother and that she has promised to give up Brant. When Lavinia does not answer her at all, she becomes frightened and realizes that her daughter had found the box in which the poison had been. Lavinia remains perfectly silent in the face of all of her mother's questions as to what she intends to do, and Christine realizes that she will tell Orin. She becomes furiously angry and rushing to Lavinia, shakes her as if to find out what she is plotting, but she learns nothing at all from her daughter. When Christine is seen with her son, it is obvious that she is doing her best

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 110

both to arouse his sympathy for her and to pet him so that she may thus counteract whatever Lavinia may do. At times Orin responds, but at other times he watches his mother rather suspiciously probably because of the suspicions which Lavinia had already planted in his mind. After a short conversation with his mother, Orin is no longer able to restrain himself and he asks his mother about Brant. Christine uses the same tactics here and tells Orin that Brant has come to see Lavinia and that the latter has accused her of the vilest things. Christine then hastens to recall to Orin their happy younger days together and for a moment they live over these days and all suspicion is laid aside. However, Orin becomes uneasy again and asks once more about Brant. Christine again tells him that the whole thing is a result of the abnormal state of Lavinia's mind, as is also the latter's accusation that she poisoned Ezra. She begs Orin not to let Lavinia turn him against her, and he tells her that no matter what she did he would forgive her anything but an affair with Brant whom he would kill if he ever found such a thing to be true. It is to be recalled from the summary of the story that following this conversation, Orin leaves the room in order to go and see his father and Lavinia is left alone for a few moments with her mother. The following conversation seems to me to show the climax of the hatred between Christine and Lavinia. All of the power and force of Christine's nature is put into what she says to her daughter.

Christine. (springs to her feet) Vinnie! (As Lavinia turns to face her--sharply) Come here--please. I don't want to shout across the room. (Lavinia comes slowly forward until she is at arm's length. Her eyes grow bleak and her mouth tightens to a thin line. The resemblance between mother and daughter as they stand confronting each other is strikingly brought out. Christine begins to speak in a low voice, coolly defiant, almost triumphant.) Well, you can go ahead now and tell Orin anything you wish! I've already told him--so you might as well save yourself the trouble. He said you must be insane! I told him how you lied about my trips to New York--for revenge--because you loved Adam yourself! (Lavinia makes a movement like a faint shudder but is immediately stiff and frozen again. Christine smiles tauntingly) So hadn't you better leave Orin out of it? You can't get him to go to the police for you. Even if you convinced him I poisoned your father, you couldn't! He doesn't want--any more than you do, or your father, or any of the Mannon dead--such a public disgrace as a murder trial would be! For it would all come out! Everything! Who Adam is and my adultery and your knowledge of it--and your love for Adam! Oh, believe me, I'll see to it that comes out if anything ever gets to a trial! I'll show you to the world as a daughter who desired her mother's lover and then tried to get her mother hanged out of hatred and jealousy! (She laughs tauntingly. Lavinia is trembling but her face remains hard and emotionless. Her lips open as if to speak but she closes them again. Christine seems drunk with her own defiant recklessness.) Go on! Try and convince Orin of my wickedness! He loves me! He hated his father! He's glad he's dead! Even if he knew I had killed him, he'd protect me! (Then all her defiant attitude collapses and she pleads, seized by an hysterical terror, by some fear she has kept hidden) For God's sake, keep Orin out of this! He's still sick! He's changed! He's grown hard and cruel! All he thinks of is death! Don't tell him about Adam! He would kill him! I couldn't live then! I would kill myself! (Lavinia starts and her eyes light up with a cruel hatred. Again her pale lips part as if she were about to say something but she controls the impulse and about-faces abruptly and walks with jerky steps from the room like some tragic mechanical doll. Christine stares after her--then as she disappears, collapses, catching at the table for support--terrifiedly) I've got to see Adam! I've got to warn him! (She sinks in the chair at right of table.)[1]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 179-180

We have in Christine Mannon a complicated character analysis. Almost every action of hers with which we have to deal is a wicked one, but yet she cannot be wholly condemned. She cannot be blamed entirely for her attitude of hatred toward her husband, and her hatred for Lavinia grew out of this same feeling. It was certainly not natural for her to have this feeling of repulsion for her own child, and she did not hate Orin because he seemed to belong only to her, and Ezra did not enter into her feelings for him. Christine can be excused somewhat in her attitude toward Ezra, but this does not excuse her love for Adam Brant and her secret meetings with him. It also does not excuse the lies which she told and her cruelty and selfishness in the murder of her husband. Christine was by no means a coward and her defiance and strength seem remarkable. She only completely breaks down at the end, and it is at the end that we have real sympathy for her. Her life seems utterly vain and broken and there is nothing more left in the world for her. She was afraid of Lavinia, and Orin was under the influence of the latter, and had finally accused his mother himself so that she could not depend upon him for solace. Christine had started out in life with every possibility of living a normal, happy life; but from the time of her marriage this happiness was gone and she sought for love elsewhere, thus ruining her life and bringing down the hatred of her own son, the one member of the family whom she loved.

There is no attempt to excuse the crimes in the life of Christine Mannon, but nevertheless we feel pity for her because her life might have been so very different. She realized the wreck of her own life, but saw that she had gone too far to correct it.

II.
Orin Mannon

I should like to look now at the characters of Lavinia and Orin Mannon, and this analysis shall be devoted for the most part to the inter-reactions of this brother and sister with each other and with their mother as illustrated by the play. Orin Mannon does not appear until after the death of his father, and in the first description of him which the author gives, it is his super-sensitive nature which is stressed. This explains much of the character of Orin Mannon. The war seemed to have had quite a powerful effect upon his mind and there seems to be a certain morbidity about him. This reaction to the war was due largely to his sensitive nature upon which was impressed the horror and yet commonplaceness of death. This part of his nature might have come from his mother because he seems to lack the reserve and strength found in Lavinia and her father. It may be because of this that Lavinia could exert such an influence over him. She seemed to possess some of the same power of commanding that her father had, and was so much like the latter in certain respects that Orin was often on the point of saluting her as he would have done his father. Orin's office

as a soldier does not seem to fit him and he is ill at ease in his attempted military bearing. It can be immediately noted that there was no sympathy or understanding between Orin and his father, and he is almost bitter in his references to his father. He can hardly believe that his father is dead, not because of any grief that he feels, but because of a certain feeling which he had that his father would always go right on living. The following quotation shows his feelings when Lavinia asks him if their father's death is no shock to him.

> Lavinia. Isn't it a shock to you, Orin?
> Orin. Certainly! What do you think I am? But--oh, I can't explain! You wouldn't understand, unless you'd been at the front. I hardened myself to expect my own death and everyone else's, and think nothing of it. I had to--to keep alive! It was part of my training as a soldier under him. He taught it to me, you might say! So when it's his turn he can hardly expect--(He has talked with increasing bitterness. Lavinia interrupts him sharply)
> Lavinia. Orin! How can you be so unfeeling?
> Orin. (Again shamefaced) I didn't mean that. My mind is still full of ghosts. I can't grasp anything but war, in which he was so alive. He was the war to me--the war that would never end until I died. I can't understand peace--his end! (Then with exasperation) God damn it, Vinnie, give me a chance to get used to things![1]

Orin originally possessed an abnormal temperament or he would not have been so affected by the war and death. His resentment toward his father probably came as a result of his early

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 112-113

life in which he was so close to his mother and learned to shut out his father from their pleasures.

It is also very interesting to note Orin's anger toward Adam Brant. This anger appears to be more of a jealousy than by a desire to preserve the honor of the family name. At first Orin still seems to have some love for his mother, but he is suspicious of her in spite of himself and can never quite believe the things that she tells him. He always loved the tenderness which his mother displayed toward him, but his love for Lavinia was very strong and he resents it when Hazel states that his sister is not soft and gentle. He returns continually to the horrors of the war and to the fact that he feels that his father will always be there in their house. He seems to have a mind that wavers, because one minute he is happy with his mother and believes her, and the next minute he is again suspicious of her and recalls what his sister has said. He has a great hatred for Brant and it is to be recalled how he told Christine that he could forgive her anything but an affair with Brant whose father had already brought disgrace upon their family. In spite of this he remembers his former love for his mother and is anxious to get things back the way they were before he went to war. At times he almost seems to resent Lavinia's hold upon him and yet he is drawn along by her greater strength, and for a time his love for his mother is forgotten. For a time it appeared that Orin believed the lies which Christine told him,

but when faced by Lavinia he wavers and becomes more and more uncertain when she speaks of absolute proofs to back up her statements. His love for his mother persists until Lavinia taunts him and then asks if he is going to allow Brant to escape. He restrains his suspicions, but all of the time he is coming to a realization of the truth of what Lavinia has told him. He promises to believe her accusations against his mother when he finds her with Brant, but when Christine herself enters the room, he senses her guilt from the manner in which she acts. The abnormality of his mind is shown very well in a conversation which he has with Lavinia just after he has killed Adam Brant.

> Orin. By God, he does look like Father.
> Lavinia. No! Come along!
> Orin. (As if talking to himself) This is like my dream. I've killed him before--over and over.
> Lavinia. Orin!
> Orin. Do you remember me telling you how the faces of the men I killed came back and changed to Father's face and finally became my own? (He smiles grimly) He looks like me, too! Maybe I've committed suicide!
> Lavinia. (Frightenedly--grabbing his arm) Hurry! Someone may come!
> Orin.(Not heeding her, still staring at Brant--strangely) If I had been he I would have done what he did! I would have loved her as he loved her--and killed Father too--for her sake!
> Lavinia. (Tensely--shaking him by the arm) Orin, for God's sake, will you stop talking crazy and come along? Do you want us to be found here? (She pulls him away forcibly.)
> Orin. (With a last look at the dead man) It's queer! It's a rotten dirty joke on someone! (He lets her hustle him out to the alleyway.)[1]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 169-170

When Lavinia and Orin return, it is Orin who wishes to talk to his mother. However, when he sees her grief, he wavers again and is torn between resentment for what she has done, and pity and love for her which arises in his heart.

The most important study of the character of Orin Mannon comes in "The Haunted", the third book of the trilogy. Here he is pursued by the idea that he was responsible for his mother's death. He feels that he has really done the same thing as murder her because he told her of the manner of Brant's death. His mind seems more abnormal than ever before and becomes so unbalanced that he seems to attain a degree of insanity. As the last part of the trilogy opens, it is told that Orin and Lavinia are expected back from a long trip to the east and when they do appear, Lavinia has the same mastery over her brother as before. He is almost in a daze and mechanically obeys his sister when she speaks to him. He can hardly bring himself to look at the house and Lavinia has to command him to look so that he may assure himself of the fact that there are no ghosts about. The queerness of his manner as a whole can even be noted from his personal appearance.

> He comes slowly and hesitatingly in from left, front. He carries himself woodenly erect now like a soldier. His movements and attitudes have the same statue-like quality that was so marked in his father. He now wears a close-cropped beard in addition to his mustache, and this accentuates his re-

> semblance to his father. The mannon semblance of his face in repose to a mask is more pronounced than ever. He has grown dreadfully thin and his black suit hangs loosely on his body. His haggard swarthy face is set in a blank lifeless expression.[1]

He seems to feel the presence of the dead in the house and becomes almost terrified as a little child might. He goes to Lavinia for protection and her strength seems to help him for short intervals. The times that he arouses himself from the daze that he is in are marked by a sense of bewilderment and great confusion.

> Lavinia. What are you doing out there? Come here! (Orin appears in the doorway. His face wears a dazed expression and his eyes have a wild, stricken look. He hurries to her as if seeking protection. She exclaims frightenedly) Orin! What is it?
>
> Orin (Strangely) I've just been in the study. I was sure she'd be waiting for me in there, where--(Torturedly) It's only they--(He points to the portraits) They're everywhere! But she's gone forever. She'll never forgive me now![2]

When Lavinia refers to Peter and Hazel, Orin exclaims that they themselves have no right to love just as their mother had no right to love Brant. Then he speaks of the change in the appearance of Lavinia and tells her that it seems as if the mother's death had set her free to become like Christine. He feels that even her soul has changed particularly since she visited the Islands. Lavinia becomes angry and again recalls him to himself by urging him to face his ghosts and to believe that all that they did in punish-

1. "Mourning becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 199-200
2. Ibid. P. 203

ing Christine was an act of justice. However, he taunts her often about her liking for the men on the island and for the clipper captain, and his manner is at times so ugly that it frightens her. He resents her love for Peter and cannot understand why she should feel happy and not have the guilty feeling that he has. The abnormal state of Orin's mind as it has progressed a little farther is shown in a later description which is given of him.

> The shutters of the windows are closed. Candles on the mantel above the fireplace light up the portrait of Ezra Mannon in his judge's robes. Orin is sitting in his father's chair at left of table, writing by the light of a lamp. A small pile of manuscript is stacked by his right hand. He is intent on his work. He has aged in the intervening month. He looks almost as old now as his father in the portrait. He is dressed in black and the resemblance between the two is uncanny. A grim smile of satisfaction twitches his lips as he stops writing and reads over the paragraph he has just finished. Then he puts the sheet down and stares up at the portrait, sitting back in his chair.[1]

Orin is writing the history of the family and all of the horrible events connected with the family. His mind is possessed of the fact that he is guilty of his mother's death, and at times he almost hates Lavinia because she does not feel this same guilt.

> Orin. (Harshly) I hate the daylight. It's like an accusing eye! No, we've renounced the day, in which normal people live--or rather it has renounced us. Perpetual night--darkness of death in life--that's the fitting habitat for guilt! You believe you can escape that, but I'm not so foolish.[2]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 217
2. Ibid. P. 218

> Orin. And I find artificial light more appropriate for my work--man' light, not God's--man's feeble striving to understand himself, to exist for himself in the darkness! It's a symbol of his life--a lamp burning out in a room of waiting shadows![1]

Such speeches as these show his mental state to be unbalanced. As early in the play as the first time that Orin appears, it is noted that he had a super-sensitive nature, and thus he would be more deeply affected by the critical events in the family than Lavinia would. He mocks and taunts her and accuses her of hoping for his death to set her free. Orin loves Hazel but he feels that he has no right to be with her because she is pure and he is defiled by his crimes. He feels that he and his sister cannot escape the law of retribution and the fate which is back of the family. He accuses his sister of wanting to become like their mother in her attraction for men. Through suggestions of this sort, he seems to gain in power over Lavinia and keeps her from going on and living her life normally in spite of the past. Orin believes that he is in his father's place and Lavinia is in her mother's place. It seems to him that she hates him but is chained to him just as their mother had been chained to Ezra. Hazel and Peter Niles are aware of the strangeness of Orin's behavior. Hazel senses a queer atmosphere about the whole Mannon house and wishes to take Orin back home with her because she believes that it is most detrimental to him to be shut up so constantly. She cannot understand why her

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 219

brother wants to marry Lavinia because she feels that Lavinia is back of all this wrong. Orin shows his true feelings before Hazel in a very sincere expression of the tragedy in his life.

> Orin. No! She can't have happiness! She's got to be punished! (suddenly taking her hand--excitedly) And listen, Hazel! You mustn't love me any more. The only love I can know now is the love of guilt for guilt which breeds more guilt--until you get so deep at the bottom of hell there is no lower you can sink and you rest there in peace! (He laughs harshly and turns away from her).[1]

However, in spite of his feelings, Orin will not confess to Hazel because he says he still loves his sister. He is still afraid of Lavinia, but he finally gains the upper hand when he exacts from her the promise that she will give up Peter. He begs her to go with him and confess but she insists that what they did was justice which requires no confession. Lavinia, in anger, expresses to him the thought that he would kill himself if he were not a coward. Orin at first seems terrified by this idea, but it works itself into his mind.

> Orin. (In a pitiful pleading whisper). Vinnie! (He stares at her with the lost stricken expression for a moment more--then the obsessed wild look returns to his eyes--with harsh mockery). Another act of justice, eh? You want to drive me to suicide as I drove Mother! An eye for an eye, is that it? But--(He stops abruptly and stares before him, as if this idea were suddenly taking hold of his tortured imagination, and speaks fascinatedly to himself) Yes! That would be justice--now you are Mother! She is speaking now through you--(More and more hypnotized by this train of thought) Yes! It's the way to peace--to find her again--my lost island--Death is an Island of Peace, too--Mother will be waiting for me there--(With excited eagerness now,

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 233

> speaking to the dead) Mother! Do you know what I'll do then? I'll get on my knees and ask your forgiveness--and say--(His mouth grows convulsed, as if he were retching up poison). I'll say, I'm glad you found love, Mother! I'll wish you happiness--you and Adam! (He laughs exultantly) You've heard me! You're here in the house now! You're calling me! You're waiting to take me home! (He turns and strides toward the door).[1]

These are the last words that are ever heard from Orin Mannon, because it is just after uttering this speech that he leaves the room and in a few moments shoots himself.

III.
Lavinia Mannon.

I come now to an analysis of the character of Lavinia, the Electra of the modern drama, and her temperament is most complex. The most important phases to be noted in connection with Lavinia are her relations to her mother and to her brother. From the very beginning of the drama her hatred for her mother is emphasized even to the point of stressing the fact that she did all in her power to lessen the resemblance which she bore to Christine.

> But it is evident Lavinia does all in her power to emphasize the dissimilarity rather than the resemblance to her parent. She wears her hair pulled tightly back as if to conceal its natural curliness, and there is not a touch of feminine allurement to her severely plain get-up. Her head is the same size as her mother's, but on her thin body it looks too large and heavy.[2]

This very description shows a great deal of Lavinia's character. She seems stern and military like her father and the author refers constantly to a woodenness and stiffness in her bearing. This fits in very well with her composure and

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 240
2. Ibid. P. 23

very great self-control. She appears very vindictive and this trait was accented by her mother's very early hatred for her which tended to cut off all natural love from her childhood. Coupled with the Mannon reserve of her father, this forced her to withdraw within herself and hide her feelings. As she grew older, she came to a clearer realization of the state of affairs, and her hatred for her mother reached a very high point particularly when she discovered her love for Adam Brant. Her manner from the very beginning is very tense and strained and during her first meeting with Peter whom she has known so long, she withdraws within herself and measures everything carefully. Her meeting with Brant is very interesting because he was able to notice something strange in her manner. There is a feeling from the very first part of the play that Lavinia must have found something attractive in Brant when he refers to their moonlight walk and the fact that she let him kiss her. However, her love for her father was so strong that she was horrified when Brant told her that her grandfather as well as her father had loved his mother. He even accuses her father of disowning his brother because of jealousy. Lavinia's nature was not always so coolly composed and the author gives a very interesting picture of her as she stands before her father's picture just previous to her first interview with her mother.

> Lavinia is discovered standing by the table. She is fighting to control herself, but her face is torn by a look of stricken anguish. She turns slowly to her father's portrait and for a moment stares at it fixedly. Then she goes to it and puts her hand over one of his hands with a loving protecting gesture.[1]

However, as soon as she hears her mother approaching, she becomes stiff and wooden again. Her manner toward her mother is cold and distant. Her bitterness is very intense and it seems almost incredible that any daughter could have such hatred for her mother. She finally succeeds in temporarily breaking down Christine's composure. Lavinia talks of her father and her duty toward him and she taunts her mother until the latter accuses her of wanting Adam for herself.

> Christine. (Stares at her daughter--a pause--then she laughs dryly) What a fraud you are, with your talk of your father and your duty! Oh, I'm not denying you want to save his pride--and I know how anxious you are to keep the family from more scandal! But all the same that's not your real reason for sparing me!
>
> Lavinia. (Confused--guiltily) It is!
>
> Christine. You wanted Adam Brant yourself!
>
> Lavinia. That's a lie!
>
> Christine. And now you know you can't have him, you're determined that at least you'll take him from me!
>
> Lavinia. No!
>
> Christine. But if you told your father, I'd have to go away with Adam. He'd be mine still. You can't bear that thought, even at the price of my disgrace, can you?
>
> Lavinia. It's your evil mind![2]

Lavinia cannot be blamed for some of her actions, because certainly the early hatred of her mother for her was most unnatural; but nevertheless we feel a certain guilt in her, and it is quite clear that she did love Adam Brant herself.

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 48
2. Ibid. P. 53

This does not excuse Christine, but it does show that Lavinia's pretended motives for punishing her mother were not as justified as she liked to pretend. In trapping her mother she plans each step most carefully as if she has been brooding upon the matter and figuring out her mode of attack. Her attitude is fierce and bitter, and her temperament seems almost malicious when she tells of writing to her father and to Orin telling them of Brant's attentions to her mother. At times Christine appears powerless before her deep hatred and scorn and fierce anger coupled with a certain self-control and reserve. She states continually that she is doing her duty toward her father and toward the honor of the Mannon family.

Lavinia's love for her father has already been stressed, and this is shown very clearly upon his return from the war. For a moment she loses her self-composure and bursts into tears, but she recovers herself almost immediately. Her father seems embarrassed at her show of emotion, and Lavinia can hardly bear to see him talk to Christine and watches them jealously. She asks him questions and perseveres in trying to keep him away from her mother. As soon as possible she brings the talk around to Brant, and is much upset when Christine tells her husband that Brant has been coming to see Lavinia. When her father asks her to leave him and her mother, she again expresses her love for him and he is some-

what abashed by her almost childish excitement. At the end of this scene, Lavinia, aroused by the sight of the embrace of her father and mother, almost discloses the whole ugly affair.

> Lavinia. (In an anguish of jealous hatred) I hate you! You steal even Father's love from me again! You stole all love from me when I was born! (Then almost with a sob, hiding her face in her hands) Oh, Mother! Why have you done this to me? (Then looking up at the window again--with passionate disgust) Father, how can you love that shameless harlot? (Then frenziedly) I can't bear it! I won't! It's my duty to tell him about her! I will! (She calls desperately) Father! Father! (The shutter of the bedroom is pushed open and Mannon leans out.
>
> Mannon. (Sharply) What is it? Don't shout like that!
>
> Lavinia. (Stammers lamely) I-I remembered I forgot to say good night, Father.
>
> Mannon (Exasperated) Good heavens! What-- (Then gently) Oh--all right--good night, Vinnie. Get to bed soon, like a good girl.
>
> Lavinia. Yes, Father. Good night. (He goes back in the bedroom and pulls the shutter closed. She stands staring fascinatedly up at the window wringing her hands in pitiful desperation).[1]

Here there is revealed the struggle in Lavinia's mind. She feels that she has had a right to love which her mother has taken away from her, and now it seems to her that Christine is going to take away her father's love for her which is all that is left. She becomes almost frantic, and yet she cannot bring herself to tell her father something which she knows will be a terrible shock to him. Her love for her father is shown again in the powerful scene in which he dies. He calls for her and she enters the room half believing that

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 86

she has dreamed and she is horrified by his dying accusation of Christine. She becomes suspicious of her mother and endeavors to ask her what Ezra had meant, but Christine faints and her questions go unanswered. Lavinia at first is frightened by her mother's collapse, but when she finds that Christine has only fainted, her hatred returns and she denounces her most bitterly for having brought on the heart attack and her father's death, and her horror is increased when she finds the poison box.

> Lavinia. (Does not notice this. Startled by Christine's collapse, she automatically bends on one knee beside her and hastily feels for her pulse. Then satisfied she has only fainted, her anguished hatred immediately returns and she speaks with strident denunciation) You murdered him just the same--by telling him! I suppose you think you'll be free to marry Adam now! But you won't! Not while I'm alive! I'll make you pay for your crime! I'll find a way to punish you! She is starting to her feet when her eyes fall on the little box on the rug. Immediately she snatches it up and stares at it, the look of suspicion changing to a dreadful, horrified certainty. Then with a shuddering cry she shrinks back along the side of the bed, the box clutched in her hand, and sinks on her knees by the head of the bed, and flings her arms around the dead man. With anguished beseeching) Father! Don't leave me alone! Come back to me! Tell me what to do![1]

However, true to the Mannon character, Lavinia hides all of this grief when before other people, and some of the townspeople even suspect her of not feeling as much sorrow as she ought to at the time of such a tragedy. Her actions toward her mother are much the same as before only more intense. She does not speak to her and will not answer when spoken to,

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 96

and she will not allow her mother out of her sight.

It is next important to notice Lavinia in relation to her brother. Upon his arrival home for his father's funeral, Orin shows a strong feeling of affection for his sister and he is influenced by her commanding nature which resembles his father's. At times she almost startles him because her tone is so like the father's. Lavinia does not rant and rail against her mother, but she seems to wear out her strength and self-control by her grim silence which was worse than any open attack. She was preparing in her own mind to bring punishment upon her mother with Orin's help. After her brother's arrival she does not enter into the conversation at all, and only appears from time to time in order to summon him to come and view the dead body of his father. Christine knows the power she will have over Orin and tries to turn the latter against her. In spite of the lies which the mother tells, there is a suspicion in Orin's mind regarding Brant which was doubtless instilled there by Lavinia's letter to him. He vows to forgive his mother anything but an affair with Brant, and it is this feeling of his to which Lavinia appeals. In the scene which takes place before the dead body of Ezra Mannon, Orin is torn between the tales of his mother and the clearer proofs of Vinnie, and the triumph of the latter is the result. This interview between Lavinia and her brother is a powerful piece of work and shows the

strength of the sister in her dealings with Orin. She startles him with her suspicious actions, and then he becomes ashamed of his filial disrespect before her sternness. At first there remains foremost in his mind the things which his mother has told him, and Lavinia is forced to appeal to his love for her and lastly to the fact that she has absolute proof for her statements. A reference to absolute proof would cause any one to pause, and so it does Orin who can scarcely believe her suspicions. Lavinia produces the poison box as evidence, and when her brother persists in not believing her, her manner becomes one of cool scorn and contempt. She appeals to his honor with regards to Captain Brant and Orin promises to punish his mother when he sees her with Brant. Thus Lavinia wins her point first of all by being in possession of the necessary facts and secondly, by her calm and firm persistance. Had she become so angry as to lose her self-control, it is very probable that Orin would not have believed her and she would have thus been completely conquered by Christine. As it is, she appeals to the affections of her brother and then to his pride and succeeds in bringing him over to her point. It is clear that Lavinia is triumphant since Orin feels his mother's guilt as soon as the latter comes and seeks his protection. Christine becomes so distracted when she sees the poison box lying over the heart of her dead husband that she makes no effort at composure and her guilt is very apparent. Lavinia's idea of

placing the box upon her father's body was a certain way to test her mother, but it was a horrible and gruesome thing to do. She seems to be driven by a desire for revenge and acts with the strategy that a general might in planning a surprise attack. She possesses only hatred for her mother and her chief desire is to trap her in the midst of her guilt. She has too much pride to let any of these crimes be known outside of the family, but she is bound that Christine shall not escape punishment. In spite of her hatred, her actions are exceedingly cruel and unnatural for a daughter toward her mother. Lavinia succeeds in her proof when she and Orin follow their mother to Adam Brant's ship and hear her declaration of love for him and her warning against her children. Orin is moved to great anger, but Lavinia restrains him until Christine has left and then Brant is killed. She directs her brother in the pillaging of the cabin of the boat so that it will look like a robbery, and he acts completely under her direction. Again Lavinia has planned each step carefully and she and not her brother has arranged the course of action and has succeeded. Nevertheless her actions are most harsh, and it is hardly possible to conceive of a hatred so bitter. She even seems to lose track of the pretense of avenging her father's death, and is impelled more by the bitterness of her own feelings.

> Lavinia. (Goes slowly to the body and stands looking down into Brant's face. Her own is frozen and expressionless. A pause. Orin can be heard in the stateroom prying open Brant's desk and

> scattering the contents of drawers around. Finally Lavinia speaks to the corpse in a grim bitter tone.) How could you love that vile old woman so? (She throws off this thought--harshly). But you're dead! It's ended! (She turns away from him resolutely--then suddenly turns back and stands stiffly upright and grim beside the body and prays coldly, as if carrying out a duty). May God find forgiveness for your sins! May the soul of our cousin, Adam Mannon, rest in peace! (Orin comes in from the stateroom and overhears the last of her prayer.)[1]

Perhaps one of the most astounding things about the character of Lavinia Mannon is her composure. There is even an intensity in this composure which hardly seems natural for a girl as young as she was. She becomes too vindictive and too much of a judge. There is a danger when one person sets himself up to pass judgment upon another individual. She acts a little too self-righteously and loses sight of the fact that she may be judged herself later on. This same feeling carries over into the scene where Christine is condemned by Orin. At first Orin himself is very angry and is cruel in his announcement of the death of Brant. However, his mother's grief arouses his human sympathies and he offers to take her away if she will only forgive him. It is Lavinia who recalls him from this manifestation of pity and whose scornful commands send him into the house. Thus she is left alone with her mother and at first her stern composure remains and she stares at her mother with "bleak, condemning eyes".[2] Finally, she even is shaken by her mother's looks and actions and by the intensity of Christine's grief. It seems that for a mo-

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 168-169

ment she almost repents of her harshness, but she stubbornly forces back this feeling and insists that it is an act of justice which she is doing. The firmness of her belief can be noted in the following quotation.

> Lavinia again makes a movement to follow her. But she immediately fights down this impulse and turns her back on the house determinedly, standing square-shouldered and stiff like a grim sentinel in black.
>
> Lavinia. (Implacably to herself) It is justice! (From the street, away off right front, Seth's thin wraith of a baritone is raised in his favorite mournful 'Shenandoah' as he nears the gateway to the drive, returning from his nightly visit to the saloon.
>
> 'Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you
> A-way, my rolling river!
> Oh, Shenandoah, I can't get near you
> Way-ay, I'm bound away
> Across the wide---'
>
> (There is the sharp report of a pistol from the left ground floor of the house where Ezra Mannon's study is. Lavinia gives a shuddering gasp, turns back to the steps, starts to go up them, stops again and stammers shakenly) It is justice! It is your justice, Father![1]

She seems more shaken in her composure here than in almost any other place, and yet she insists that she has done an act of justice. Orin's grief at his mother's death is overwhelming and he feels responsible for her death. Lavinia tries to soothe him but her chief thought is to quiet him so that he will not disclose anything harmful to them. When Orin and Lavinia return from their trip, it is to be noted that Orin seems to have gained a certain power over his sister because of her fear at his strange sayings and actions. She seems to feel no guilt or ghosts of crime as he does and she is anxious

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 180

to marry Peter Niles immediately. It is strange to notice the change which has come over her both in her personal looks and in her actions. She has seemed to become free since her mother's death and feels that now she can really live. She openly expresses her love for Peter and he is a little shocked at this boldness which is such a new thing in her. Orin has noticed this change in her also.

> Orin. (Grimly) Mother felt the same about--(Then with a strange, searching glance at her) You don't know how like Mother you've become, Vinnie. I don't mean only how pretty you've gotten--
>
> Lavinia. (With a strange shy eagerness) Do you really think I'm as pretty now as she was, Orin?
>
> Orin. (As if she hadn't interrupted) I mean the change in your soul, too. I've watched it ever since we sailed for the East. Little by little it grew like Mother's soul--as if you were stealing hers--as if death had set you free--to become her![1]

Orin also reminds her in a rather ugly manner of her interest in the captain of their ship and in the native of the Island where they had stopped, and these remarks which are made in front of Peter seem to embarrass her as did her mother's earlier suggestions that she loved Adam Brant herself. She seems to feel a freedom since her mother is gone and she is anxious to be beautiful and attract others. It will not be necessary to pass over in detail the days before Orin's death, because they have already been hinted at. Lavinia still kept some of her power over him, but nevertheless she was afraid of what he might disclose. She seems to have been trying

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 204

desperately to get away from the Mannons; but when Orin dies, she realizes that it has all been too much for her and that she cannot get away from the fate in the family. She wanted to get away from the Mannons and become like her mother, but the Mannons have too strong a hold upon her. She felt at first that she would escape all guilt and would be able to marry Peter and enjoy a happy existence, but there was too much in the family to allow such happiness. She was pursued by Orin in almost the same way that she pursued her mother, and she had to yield to this all-encompassing fate which pursued the different generations of the Mannons.

In the last act of the trilogy Lavinia appears in deep mourning and with the same frozen expression and haggard look as earlier in the play. She is still carrying out her plans to marry Peter and she tries to make their house look as cheerful as possible in expectation of his arrival. However, she is anxious to get away from the house as soon as possible.

> Lavinia. No, thank you, Seth. I'm waiting for Peter. (Then after a pause, curiously) Why didn't you tell me to go in the house and lie down? (Seth pretends not to hear the question, avoiding her eyes). You understand, don't you? You've been with us Mannons so long! You know there's no rest in this house which Grandfather built as a temple of Hate and Death!
>
> Seth. (Blurts out) Don't you try to live here, Vinnie! You marry Peter and git clear!
>
> Lavinia. I'm going to marry him! And I'm going away with him and forget this house and all that ever happened in it!
>
> Seth. That's talkin', Vinnie!

> Lavinia. I'll close it up and leave it in the sun and rain to die. The portraits of the Mannons will rot on the walls and the ghosts will fade back into death. And the Mannons will be forgotten. I'm the last and I won't be one long. I'll be Mrs. Peter Niles. Then they're finished! Thank God! (She leans back in the sunlight and closes her eyes. Seth stares at her worriedly, shakes his head and spits. Then he hears something and peers down the drive, off left.)[1]

Hazel Niles comes and accuses Lavinia of driving Orin to his death, because she says that he had hinted at terrible things which had happened. However, she soon comes forth with the words which Lavinia has been dreading to hear--that she must not marry Peter and drag him into whatever exists in their family. Hazel insists that she would not be able to hide this evil, and that Peter would hate her in the end. She tells Lavinia that Peter has quarreled with his mother about her and left home, and she pleads with her to give him up. She believes that Lavinia is wicked and she tells her that if she insists on marrying Peter, it is only right to let him read what Orin wrote since she has told him about it. At the mention of this, Lavinia feels that the past cannot die, but a stop is put to all talk by the appearance of Peter himself. For a time they discuss the plans for their marriage which Peter declares he will carry through in spite of his mother and Hazel. However, Lavinia notices a change in him and is afraid that he suspects her and wonders what Orin wrote. Peter denies this vehemently and Lavinia pleads with him to marry her immediately because she is afraid to delay. Peter

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 247

is shocked by this because it is only just the day of Orin's funeral, and he does grow somewhat suspicious because of her fear of waiting. She realizes what is working in his mind and she becomes almost desperate as she snatches at what is her last opportunity for any normal happiness. She knows that if she loses Peter she will be completely alone and will have to remain back with all the ghosts of their family past and the crimes of their own generation. We cannot help but feel a certain pity for her in her last passionate appeals. Her feelings are shown in the following quotation.

> Lavinia. (With a wild beaten laugh) The dead coming between! They always would, Peter! You trust me with your happiness! But that means trusting the Mannon dead--and they're not to be trusted with love! I know them too well! And I couldn't bear to watch your eyes grow bitter and hidden from me and wounded in their trust of life! I love you too much! [1]

Peter's suspicions are aroused all the more by this speech, and when Lavinia notices this, she tries to refute her statement and becomes almost beside herself in her plea for a moment of love and happiness. She seems to lose complete control of her reason, and becomes frantic in her passionate appeal; but she is brought back to herself when she unconsciously utters the name of Adam. She realizes that all hope is gone and that she must reconcile herself to her fate. It is well to note one of her last speeches where we see none of

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 253

the controlled and reserved Lavinia, but rather a girl driven by her passions and emotions to a pitch that is almost hysterical. She has restrained herself almost to the breaking point and she is yearning for a little human affection to replace the horrors which she has been experiencing.

> Lavinia. (Desperately) No--nothing! (Then suddenly throwing her arms around him) No! Don't think of that--not yet! I want a little while of happiness--in spite of all the dead! I've earned it! I've done enough--! (Growing more desperate--pleading wildly) Listen, Peter! Why must we wait for marriage? I want a moment of joy--of love--to make up for what's coming! I want it now! Can't you be strong, Peter? Can't you be simple and pure? Can't you forget sin and see that all love is beautiful? (She kisses him with desperate passion) Kiss me! Hold me close! Want me! Want me so much you'd murder anyone to have me! I did that--for you! Take me in this house of the dead and love me! Our love will drive the dead away! It will shame them back into death! (At the topmost pitch of desperate frantic abandonment) Want me! Take me, Adam! (She is brought back to herself with a start by this name escaping her--bewilderedly, laughing idiotically) Adam? Why did I call you Adam? I never even heard that name before outside the Bible! (Then suddenly with a hopeless, dead finality) Always the dead between! It's no good trying any more![1]

In this statement Lavinia's feelings soar to the heights of a frantic appeal for love and happiness, and then fall heavily with the realization that she can never enjoy normal human relations. Peter is shocked by her attitude and is willing to attribute it to hysteria, but Lavinia tells him that he must go home and make up with his mother and never see her again, because she has come to the realization that the dead are too

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 253-254

strong to permit her to love. Peter's feeling is one of astonishment at first and then he becomes suspicious once more and asks if her decision is based upon what Orin wrote. He receives no answer to this and then he reminds her of what Orin had suggested with regard to one of the natives on the Island which they had visited. At first Lavinia is wounded by this idea and is about to deny it vehemently, when suddenly it comes to her as a way out, and feigning a harsh vulgarity she pretends to Peter that she hasbeen guilty of relations with the native. Peter is horrified when she insists that this is true, and he leaves her with the stammered words that his mother and Hazel are right in declaring her bad at heart. Lavinia's first impulse is to call him back and acknowledge to him the falsity of her statement, but instead she turns away and lets him go with the full realization that her doom is to remain there with the dead. She sees that she must be punished and this recalls the many times that Orin told her that she would not be able to live a normal life after committing the crimes that she had. Thus she goes into the house never to come out again.

> Lavinia. (Grimly) Don't be afraid. I'm not going the way Mother and Orin went. That's escaping punishment. And there's no one left to punish me. I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself! Living along here with the dead is a worse act of justice than death or prison! I'll never go out or see anyone! I'll have the shutters nailed closed so no sunlight can ever get in. I'll live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die! (With a

> strange cruel smile of gloating over the years of self-torture) I know they will see to it I live for a long time! It takes the Mannons to punish themselves for being born."[1]

She has returned again to her stiff wooden manner and her composure which is almost expressionless. The analysis of Lavinia's character is interesting but it is morbid. Her character was influenced a very great deal by her mother's hatred for her and practically all of the normal relations in her life had been warped by her antagonism for her mother. She was jealous of Adam Brant's love for her mother and she undertook to sit in judgment upon her mother for her misdeeds.

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 256

CHAPTER V.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CHARACTERS IN O'NEILL AND IN THE GREEK DRAMATISTS

I.

Agamemnon and Ezra Mannon

Having completed the analysis of the characters in "Mourning Becomes Electra", I come now to a direct comparison of the O'Neill drama with the Greek. The first step in this actual comparison will be concerned with the characters, since there is such a striking parallel between the ancient and the modern characters. In a survey of Ezra Mannon and Agamemnon as the latter is presented in Aeschylus, it is clear that both are soldiers and have certain traits of the military mind. Both are men of ability and yet their downfall seemed to be caused by something in their own natures. This is less true in the case of Ezra Mannon than in Agamemnon whose crimes were more of the concrete sort. Very little is told of the early life of Agamemnon aside from the horrible deeds which had been committed in his family for several generations. In the Greek drama the stress is laid upon certain crimes which Agamemnon committed during his life. It is shown that these crimes arose from a certain war lust in him which tended to destroy the more gentle side of his nature. Thus his downfall was caused by a tragic flaw in his own character, and he does not appear at any time as a thoroughly evil person. This same feeling may be said to exist toward Ezra Mannon

whose fall certainly arouses the profound emotions of pity and terror. In the case of Ezra Mannon there was a certain stain on the family name which had been handed down by the mis-conduct of David Mannon and the subsequent hatred and intolerance of Abe Mannon, Ezra's father. Both Ezra Mannon and Agamemnon had the military mind which tended to lessen their normal human sympathies. Ezra had a nature which liked to command and which was accustomed to being obeyed throughout his life.

II.

Clytemnestra and Christine Mannon

The situation in the cases of both Clytemnestra and Christine is similar. Both had lovers due probably to certain actions on the part of their husbands. However, it does seem that we can be less severe with Clytemnestra than with Christine Mannon. The sacrifice of the daughter, Iphigenia, was a meditated act; while the reserve and coldness of Ezra Mannon's nature was partly due to his early life and to his rather silent, mysterious way which had first attracted Christine. O'Neill is more interested in a complex analysis of the inner workings of the mind of Ezra Mannon, and Aeschylus stresses the religious and ethical significance of the problem or moral issue of the drama. The crimes of Agamemnon are committed entirely because of his war lust which drove him to sacrifice his daughter, utterly annihilate Troy, and finally take upon himself the honor due to a god.

Ezra Mannon too was a soldier which would probably account for some of the reserve in his nature, but he used this profession for the purpose of living an active life since Christine had shown such a hatred for him. Some of this hatred might have been justified, but it caused Ezra to suppress his feelings more and more, and to withdraw into his shell of reserve. None of this detail is seen in the Greek, nor is there any hint given of a strangeness between father and son as there existed between Orin and his father. There is in the Greek the idea of the great love of Electra for her father which is carried out in the devotion of Lavinia. I should like to look first at the attitude of Clytemnestra and Christine toward their husbands. In the Greek, Clytemnestra never forgave Agamemnon for the sacrifice of her child. In the modern drama Christine never was able to overcome her disgust for Ezra, and when he succeeded in taking Orin off to war with him, this seemed more than she could endure. Christine in one place tells Lavinia that she would have never been tempted to her actions with Brant had Orin been left at home with her. Thus we see both of these women hating with a bitterness which could not be concealed. They both knew that their husbands' return from war had to be met with a crisis because they could then no longer pretend in their relationships, and thus the murder took place in each case. The actual means of the killing is different, but that difference is merely secondary. It is interesting to note

that in both instances, the lover assists in the crime. In speaking of the lovers, it will be well to call attention here to the similarity of the positions of Aegisthus and Adam Brant. Adam Brant is similar to Aegisthus in that he is not a mere stranger but is related to Ezra Mannon. We know that Adam and Ezra are first cousins, and that Adam's real name was Mannon. In recalling the Greek story, we remember that Aegisthus is the son of Thyestes, brother to Atreus, Agamemnon's father; and thus the same relationship exists. The fathers of both Aegisthus and Adam were guilty of the crime of adultery and this sin is carried on in the sons as a sort of revenge for the intolerant treatment of the father of each. With regard to the lovers the same family relationships and crimes exist. Atreus punished his brother, Thyestes, and a feud existed from then on between the two families. Aegisthus carried it on in his love for Clytemnestra. Abe Mannon punished his brother, David and David's son, Adam brought about his revenge for this punishment in his love for Christine. Returning now to Clytemnestra and Christine, we saw expressed the hatred of each and the exultation at the completion of the crime. The exultation of Christine does not come after the murder of Ezra, but it does come after her conversation with Brant in which she has disclosed to him her plans for killing her husband.

(Brant goes out in the hall and a moment later the front door is heard closing after him. Christine hurries from the door to the window and watches him

from behind the curtains as he goes down the drive. She is in a state of tense, exultant excitement. Then, as if an idea had suddenly come to her, she speaks to his retreating figure with a strange sinister air of elation). You'll never dare leave me now, Adam--for your ships or your sea or your naked island girls--when I grow old and ugly! (She turns back from the window. Her eyes are caught by the eyes of her husband in the portrait and for a moment she stares back into them, as if fascinated. Then she jerks her glance away and, with a little shudder she cannot repress, turns and walks quickly from the room and closes the door behind her.)[1]

Christine is not quite as hardened as Clytemnestra because she collapses after the completion of the crime and the death of Ezra. In the "Agamemnon" of Aeschylus there is expressed the hatred of Clytemnestra and a little later her exultation. She feels no sorrow whatsoever at her deed, and unlike Christine, she makes no attempt to conceal the fact that the murder was committed by her.

(Clytemnestra)
I spoke to you before, and what I spoke
Suited the time; nor shames me now to speak
Mine own refutal. For how shall we entrap
Our foe, our seeming friend, in scapeless ruin,
Save that we fence him round with nets too high
For his o'erleaping? What I did, I did
Not with a random inconsiderate blow,
But from old Hate, and with maturing Time.
Here, where I struck, I take my rooted stand,
Upon the finished deed: the blow so given
And with wise forethought so by me devised,
That flight was hopeless, and to ward it vain,
With many-folding net, as fish are caught,
I drew the lines about him, mantled round
With bountiful destruction; twice I struck him,
And twice he groaning fell with limbs diffused
Upon the ground; and as he fell, I gave
The third blow, sealing him a votive gift
To gloomy Hades, saviour of the dead.

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 64-65

And thus he spouted forth his angry soul,
Bubbling a bitter stream of frothy slaughter,
And with the dark drops of the gory dew
Bedashed me; I delighted nothing less
Than doth the flowery calix, full surcharged
With fruity promise, when Jove's welkin down
Distils the rainy blessing. Men of Argos,
Rejoice with me in this, or, if ye will not,
Then do I boast alone. If e'er 'twas meet
To pour libations to the dead, he hath them
In justest measure. By most righteous doom,
Who drugged the cup with curses to the brim,
Himself hath drunk damnation to the dregs.

(Chorus)

Thou art a bold-mouthed woman. Much we marvel
To hear thee boast thy husband's murder thus.

(Clytemnestra)

Ye tempt me as a woman, weak, unschooled.
But what I say, ye know, or ought to know,
I say with fearless heart. Your praise or blame
Is one to me. Here Agamemnon lies,
My husband, dead, the work of this right hand--
The hand of a true workman. Thus it stands.[1]

Thus there is no attempt made here to hide the crime as there is in the O'Neill drama. However, the reaction to the crime is similar in both cases because we recall Lavinia's vows to punish her mother and we see the Greek chorus declaring that the Queen will have to suffer for her crime no matter what her motive was for murdering Agamemnon.

(Chorus)

Thou are high and haughty-hearted,
And from lofty thoughts within thee
Mighty words are brimming o'er;
For thy sober sense is madded
With the purple-dripping gore;
And thine eyes with fatness swell
From bloody feasts: but mark me well,
Time shall come, avenging Time,
And hunt thee out, and track thy crime:
Then thou, when friends are far, shalt know
Stroke for stroke, and blow for blow.[2]

1. Everyman Edition, the "Lyrical Dramas of Aeschylus" P.82-3
2. Ibid. P. 83-84

I shall look next at another very important phase of the characters of Clytemnestra and Christine Mannon and that is their attitude toward their daughters. I have already shown the hatred of Christine for Lavinia which grew out of her hatred for Ezra. Lavinia always seemed to remind her of Ezra and her hatred increased after Lavinia found out her crimes and set about punishing her. Somewhat this same attitude exists between Clytemnestra and Electra. The Greek does not show any relation between the mother and daughter prior to the death of Agamemnon, but the Greek drama does tell of the harsh treatment afterwards which is seconded also by Aegisthus. Electra, in mourning for her father, seems to irritate Clytemnestra in her guilty love for Aegisthus and the mother is anxious to get the daughter out of her sight. The Greek gives several instances of this unjust treatment of Electra by her mother who tended to deprive her of her rights and royal privileges.

(Electra)

Hermes, that swayest underneath the ground,
Of powers divine, Infernal and Supernal,
Most weighty herald, herald me in this,
That every subterranean god, and earth,
Even mother earth, who gave all things their birth,
And nurseth the reviving germs of all,
May hear my prayer, and with their sleepless eyes
Watch my parental halls. And while I dew
Thy tomb with purifying stream, O father,
Pity thou me, and on thy loved Orestes
With pity look, and to our long lost home
Restore us!--us, poor friendless outcasts both,
Bartered by her who bore us, and exchanged
Thy love for his who was thy murderer.
My self do menial service in this house;
Orestes lives in exile; and they twain
In riot waste the fruits of thy great toils.[1]

1.Everyman Ed., "Lyrical Dramas of Aeschylus"

(Electra)

I, too, as with a bitter wave was lashed,
And pierced, as with an arrow, at the sight
Of this loved lock; and from my thirsty eyne
With troubled overflowings unrestrained
The full tide gushes: for none here would dare
To gift a lock to Agamemnon's grave;
No citizen, much less the wife that slew him.
My mother most unmotherly, her own children
With godless hate pursuing, evil-minded:
And though, to think this wandering lock have graced
My brother's head--even his--my loved Orestes,
Were bliss too great, yet will I hold the hope.[1]

(Electra)

I, the while, accounted
Lower than most low,
Like a dog, was sundered
From my father's hearth,
An evil day, and wandered
Far from seats of mirth;
In my chamber weeping
Tears of silent woe,
From rude gazes keeping
Grief too great for show.[2]

This same hatred of mother for daughter is found in the "Electra" of Sophocles where Electra tells the chorus of women about her treatment.

(Electra)

But already most of my day,
Hopeless, has faded away;
I can do no longer withal;
Without parents to cherish me I waste,
Without husband's love to defend;
Yea alien-like, disgraced,
I inhabit my father's hall,
And in this guise attend
At a board with no feast laid,
Uncomely arrayed.[3]

(Electra)

...At home
I weep and waste and sorrow as I survey
The unblest feast that bears my father's name,
In private; for I cannot even weep
So freely as my heart would have me do;
For this tongue-valiant woman with vile words
Upbraids me, crying 'Thou God-forsaken thing,

1. Everyman Ed., "Lyrical Dramas of Aeschylus" "Choephorae" P. 104-5-103
2. Ibid. P. 112-113

Has no man's father died, save only thine?
Is nobody in mourning, except thee?
Ill death betide thee, and the nether Gods
Give thee no end to these thy sorrowings!
So she reviles; save when she hears it said
Orestes is at hand; then instantly
She is possest, and comes and screams at me--
'Is it not you who are the cause of this?
Pray is not this your doing, who stole Orestes
Out of my hands, and conjured him away?
But mind you, you shall pay me well for it!'
So snarling, there joins with her and stands by
And hounds her forward her illustrious groom,
The all unmanly, all injurious pest,
Who fights no battles without women!
Waiting and waiting, till Orestes come
And end it, miserably daily die.
For always meaning, never doing, he
Has utterly confounded all my hopes
Remote or present. Friends, in such a case,
There is no room--no, not for soberness
Or piety; but, beneath injuries,
There is deep need we prove injurious too.[1]

(Clytemnestra)
You gad abroad, then, masterless again,
Aegisthus absent; who did hinder you
From bringing scandal on your family
By brawling at the doors! Now he is gone,
You pay no heed to me; though many a time,
In many people's ears, you have proclaimed--
I, without shame or warrant, violate
Your rights and honours! I meanwhile commit
No violence; I but repay with scorn
The scorn you heap on me.[2]

(Electra)
Ay truly,
It's an offence even to admonish you,
Who let your tongue run freely, when you say
That I speak evil of my mother! I
A slave-mistress account you, over us,
As much as mother; for a servile life
Is that I lead, compassed with many griefs,
Wrought by yourself and by your paramour.
And poor Orestes is an exile, too,
Hardly delivered from your violence,
And living on in wretchedness--the same
You have so oft charged me with nurturing
To take revenge on you; and so I would--
Never doubt that--if I were strong enough,
Now for that treason, publish me to all

1. Everyman Ed., The "Dramas of Sophocles" "Electra" P. 91
2. Ibid. P. 97

Shameless -- perverse -- abusive -- what you will;
And if I be an adept in the same,
I do bare justice to your blood in me!
(Lady)
I see her breathing fury! Right or wrong,
Now, 'tis all one, for any thought she gives it!
(Clytemnestra)
What sort of thought, then, must I give to her,
Who in this fashion dares insult her mother,
And at her years? Do you suppose she means
To exceed all measure in her shamelessness?
(Electra)
Now understand, I do feel shame at this,
Although to you I may not seem to feel it.
I do perceive that I am doing things
Unseasonable, and unbefitting me.
Only your acts and your hostility
Force me to this behavior. Infamy
Is got by contact with the infamous.
(Clytemnestra)
Insolent creature! I, my words and acts,
Make you so loudly over-eloquent?
(Electra)
It is your fault, not mine; you are the doer,
And deeds find names.
(Clytemnestra)
Now not by Artemis,
Who is my mistress, when Aegisthus comes
Shall you escape, for this audacity!
(Electra)
See, now you fly into a frenzy! First
You let me speak my mind--then, you'll not listen![1]

The following conversation takes place after the old guardian has brought to Clytemnestra the news of Orestes' supposed death, and she is rejoicing.

(Clytemnestra)
Nay indeed, not in vain.
Why should you say in vain? If you are come
With a sure token that the man is dead,
Who was indeed the offspring of my being,
But from this bosom and maternal care
Revolted, and became as one estranged.
An exile; never, from the day he left
This country, saw me more; but, laying to me
His father's death, was ever threatening me,
So that sweet sleep by neither night nor day

1. Everyman Ed., The "Dramas of Sophocles" "Electra" P.99-100

Would cover me, but the impending hour
Held me continually in fear of death;
While now, since I am this day freed from terror
Of him, and of her too--for she dwelt with me
A far worse canker, ever draining deep
My very life-blood--now, for all her menaces,
I shall dwell tranquil!

(Electra)

O me miserable!
Why now, Orestes, there is room enough
To groan for thy misfortune, when, being thus,
Thou art scorned by this thy mother! Is it well?

(Clytemnestra)

Not thou--but he being as he is, is well.

(Electra)

Hear, Nemesis of him who is no more!

(Clytemnestra)

Those she should hear Nemesis did hear, and well
Did she perform!

(Electra)

Triumph! You are happy now.[1]

The same strain of Electra's misfortune is repeated in the drama of Euripides.

(Autargus)

...In her father's house
Remained Electra: her, when youth's warm bloom
Glowed on her cheek, the high-born chiefs of Greece
In marriage sought: through fear lest she should bear
To any Argive sons that might revenge
The death of Agamemnon, in the house
Aegisthus held her, and repulsed the suit
Of ev'ry wooer. But his gloomy fears
Still prompting that by stealth she might bear sons
To one of noble lineage, he resolved
To kill her; but her mother, though her soul
Was fierce and ruthless, saved her from his hands;
She for her husband's murder had some plea
To urge, but dreaded from her children's blood
Public abhorrence. Then Aegisthus framed
These villainous designs: he offered gold,
The son of Agamemnon, from this land
Escaped, whoe'er would kill; to me espoused
He gives Electra; from Mycenae sprung
My parents, thus far no reproach is mine,
My race illustrious, but not blest with wealth,
And poverty obscures my noble birth.

1. Everyman Ed., The "Dramas of Sophocles" "Electra" P. 104-5

> To one thus sunk he gave her, that his fears
> Might likewise sink; for should she wed a man
> Whose high rank gives him lustre, he might rouse
> The murder of her father, sleeping now,
> And vengeance then might on Aegisthus fall.[1]

It can be seen from all of these examples that the treatment of Electra by her mother was most harsh. The events of the dramas may differ, but all three of these Greek dramatists make Clytemnestra most cruel. However, it does not seem that she had any such hatred of Electra during the latter's childhood as Christine had for Lavinia. Clytemnestra's truly harsh treatment probably did not begin until after the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the fact which she gives as the reason for the murder of Agamemnon. Christine had no such motive as even this one, and thus it appears that her's is even more of a crime.

There is not quite such a marked parallel in the cases of Clytemnestra and Orestes and Christine and Orin. The Greek does not stress the early love of Clytemnestra for her son, and hence we do not know whether any such affection existed or not. The parallelism and influence here appears in the affect of the mother's death upon both young men. In both Christine and Clytemnestra we have characters who were somewhat justified in their feelings toward their husbands. However, this does not justify the murders, the adulterous relations, or the strange treatment of the daughters. It is plain to see that Mr. O'Neill was very much influenced by the Greek conception of Clytemnestra, and he follows this con-

1. Everyman Ed., The "Plays of Euripides" Vol.1 P.159-160

ception very closely. He makes Christine pay with her life for her crime just as Clytemnestra had to pay, and yet both of these women appear as very strong characters. Both of them seem to be stronger than their lovers who, in neither case, can compare to them either in natural ability or in courage. The feeling toward the lovers is one of contempt and scorn because they seem to be willing to hide behind the actions of women, and they do not demand their revenge openly.

III.

Orestes and Orin Mannon.

The next study of influence will have to do with the character of Orestes as it affected Eugene O'Neill's character of Orin. In the dramas of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides it is Orestes who raises his own hand to slay his mother. In the modern drama the mother actually dies by her own hand, but her suicide is really the result of certain treatment by Orin consisting in the murder of Brant. Thus there is practically the same situation that is found in the Greek because Orin may be said to be as responsible for the actual death of his mother as Orestes. The affect of this crime upon the two young men is much the same. In Aeschylus and Euripides Orestes is pursued by the Furies who seem to be the embodiment of the spirit of Clytemnestra punishing her son for his deed. The modern drama could not utilize such a factor as the Furies who, in O'Neill may be said to be represented by the conscience of Orin if we can use the rather

hackneyed word conscience to portray the great inner suffering and torment of his mind and soul as he held himself responsible as a murderer. The suffering was greater in the case of Orin Mannon because he had no divine sanction for the revenge of his father as Orestes had from the god, Apollo. However there is a marked similarity in the fact that both Orestes and Orin performed the murders from a sense of duty, although this sense differed in each case. The Greek shows it to be almost a moral obligation for the son to avenge his father's death and preserve the honor of the family. Some of this same idea is carried out in the fact that Orin did not avenge his father's death because of any feeling of great love which had ever existed between the two, because it is made quite clear that there never had been any intimacy or affection between the father and son. Thus it would seem that Orin must have been thinking of the family honor because he told his mother that he could forgive her anything but the disgrace of an affair with Brant. However, as soon as he sees the deep grief of his mother, he realizes the blow he has struck at her and begs to be forgiven. It seems in the last section of Mr. O'Neill's trilogy that he must have been deeply influenced by the madness of Orestes because it is possible to feel the weakening of the sensitive mind of Orin. Lavinia refers to the strangeness of his behavior during their trip and then we are shown by the author his morbid actions at home. He becomes grim and

foreboding particularly in the writing of the family history, and it is plain that his mind is not normal. Orestes is also pursued by terrible torments, but the Greek restores him to a normal state. Part of the abnormal state of Orin's mind was due to his contact with his sister because he felt their guilt and yet he saw her trying to get away from it. He blames her for urging him on and is irritated by a lack of self-condemnation on her part. This is found in the O'Neill drama to a much greater extent than in the Greek because in the Greek Electra blames herself for her actions particularly as she is portrayed by the dramas of Euripides. The abnormality of the mind of Orin is told about by Lavinia after their return from the trip to the far east. She believes that on this trip she has cured him of his strangeness, but he behaves mechanically and seems afraid to face the house with its associations. Orin makes several remarks immediately upon his entrance into the house when he and Lavinia return, and they are very similar to the ravings that we hear from the lips of Orestes when he is pursued by the Furies.

> Orin (Strangely) I've just been in the study. I was sure she'd be waiting for me in there, where-- (Torturedly) But she wasn't! She isn't anywhere. It's only they--(He points to the portraits) They're everywhere! But she's gone forever. She'll never forgive me now!
>
> Lavinia (Harshly). Orin! Will you be quiet!
>
> Orin. (Unheeding--with a sudden turn to bitter resentful defiance) Well, let her go! What is she to me? I'm not her son any more! I'm Father's! I'm a Mannon! And they'll welcome me home!
>
> Lavinia. (Angrily commanding) Stop it, do you hear me!

Orin. (Shocked back to awareness by her tone--pitifully confused) I-I didn't--don't be angry, Vinnie.[1]

Lavinia. (Sharply) You promised you weren't going to talk any more morbid nonsense. (He subsides meekly. She goes on reproachfully) Remember all I've gone through on your account. For months after we sailed you didn't know what you were doing. I had to live in constant fear of what you might say. I wouldn't live through those horrible days again for anything on earth. And remember this homecoming is what you wanted. You told me that if you could come home and face your ghosts, you knew you could rid yourself forever of your silly guilt about the past.[2]

In the Greek dramas the Furies take possession of Orestes and the torment which he suffers is similar to that of Orin who is almost afraid that he will see his mother's ghost. In the "Chorphorae" of Aeschylus there is shown the torment of Orestes.

The Furies appear in the background.

Orestes. Ah, me! see there! like Gorgons!
look! look there!
All dusky-vested, and their locks entwined
With knotted snakes. Away! I may not stay.
Chorus. O son, loved of thy sire, be calm nor let
Vain phantoms fret thy soul, in triumph's hour.
Orestes. These are no phantoms, but substantial horrors;
Too like themselves they show, the infernal hounds
Sent from my mother!
Chorus. 'Tis the fresh-gouted blood
Upon thy hand, that breeds thy brain's distraction.
Orestes. Ha! how they swarm! Apollo! more-yet more!
And from their fell eyes droppeth murderous gore.
Chorus. There is atonement. Touch but Loxias' altar,
And he from bloody stain shall wash thee clean.
Orestes. Ye see them not. I see them. There!--Away!
The hell-hounds hunt me: here I may not stay.[3]

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 203
2. Ibid. P. 205
3. Everyman Ed., The "Lyrical Dramas of Aeschylus" P.129-130

In the "Orestes" of Euripides there is again shown the suffering of the son as he is tormented.

> Electra. Since then the poor Orestes pines away
> Impaired with cruel sickness; on his bed
> He lies; his mother's blood to frenzy whirls
> His tortured sense: th' avenging powers, that haunt
> His soul with terrors thus, I dare not name.
> The sixth day this, since on the hallowed pile
> My slaughtered mother purged her stains away.
> No food hath passed his lips, no bath refreshed
> His limbs; but in his garments covered close,
> When his disease abates a little,
> He melts in tears; and sometimes from his couch
> Starts furious, like a colt burst from his yoke.[1]
>
> Electra. The female line of Tyndarus was born
> To deep disgrace, and infamous through Greece.
> Orestes. Be thou unlike them then; 'tis in thy power;
> And further than in words thy virtue prove.
> Electra. Alas, my brother, wildly rolls thine eye;
> So quickly changed! the frentic fit returns.
> Orestes. Ah, mother! Do not set thy Furies on me.
> See, how their fiery eyeballs glare in blood,
> And wreathing snakes hiss in their horrid hair!
> There, there they stand, ready to leap upon me.[2]

Thus we can compare the sufferings of both Orin and Orestes. It is to be noted that Orestes does not place the blame upon Electra of urging him to the deed, which we see that she does in the Euripides version. On the contrary, Orin blames Lavinia for her actions and is aroused because she seems to feel no guilt. He is overwhelmed by his sense of guilt and he never overcomes it, but goes to his death feeling that he has murdered his mother. Orin is much more morbid than Orestes. In the case of the Greek the murder was committed because Apollo demanded that the death of Agamemnon be avenged. Thus Orestes is finally freed from the Furies, but Orin is never

1. Everyman Ed., The "Dramas of Euripides" "Orestes" P. 199
2. Ibid. P. 204

rid of his suffering and goes down under it. There is also in the O'Neill drama the factor of the great love which existed from childhood between Orin and his mother. This phase is not found in the Greek although it is suggested that Electra had always been partial to her father.

In concluding a comparison of the characters of Orestes and Orin, it is clear that Mr. O'Neill was influenced both by the external and by the internal phases. Both Orin and Orestes appear for the first time in the play after the death of the father. Orestes needs no proof of his mothers' guilt as Orin does, because Clytemnestra makes no attempt to hide her actions. Both of the sons are the cause of the mother's deaths since Orestes actually plunged the sword into his mother's breast and Orin drove his mother to suicide by telling her that he had killed Brant. Thus the death of the father is avenged in each case, and yet each youth suffers because of the awful deed he has committed to bring about this vengeance. The fate of each differs because Orestes has done his deed by divine sanction, and Orin has merely acted by the urging of Lavinia and his own anger. Thus Orestes is saved, but Orin never recovers his normality but takes his own life. This lays all of the responsibility of the horrors at the feet of Lavinia. The Greek Orestes lacks the morbidity of an Orin Mannon, and therefore he appears as more dignified and of a larger scope. In the modern drama it is necessary to study the character of Orin himself to know him and to

learn of his sensitiveness and his habit of letting Lavinia command him. In the Greek it is necessary to study the actions of Orestes and their moral outcome. Orestes is more universal than Orin, but yet O'Neill clearly shows that he was not satisfied with the solution of the Greek dramas and this brings about the change in interpretation.

IV.

Electra and Lavinia Mannon

The last characters with which I wish to deal are Lavinia Mannon and Electra. Mr. O'Neill's conception of Lavinia approaches more closely the Electra of Euripides than the Electra of either of the other Greek dramatists. In Euripides the character of Electra is much more important than in any of the other Greek plays. It will be well to observe first how Electra and Lavinia are alike. I have already pointed out in dealing with the mothers that in the case of both Electra and Lavinia there was no love between mother and daughter. This is felt even to a greater degree in Lavinia who had suffered under the hatred of her mother from the time of her first memory. We are not told of any such hatred between Clytemnestra and Electra until after the murder of Agamemnon, and then the hatred seems to be aroused by the fact that Electra reminds her mother constantly of her crimes both by her condemnations and also by her mere presence. Clytemnestra wishes to have her out of the way entirely so that her children by Aegisthus may enjoy the first place. She cannot quite bring herself to the idea of having her killed

as Aegisthus suggests in Euripides, and therefore, she allows her to be given in marriage to a man far below her in rank. Both Lavinia and Electra very naturally resent the lovers, Adam Brant and Aegisthus. One of the chief relationships in the theme as handled by the Greeks and by O'Neill is that relationship between brother and sister. In all of the Greek plays Electra places all of her hope in the coming of Orestes, and when she learns of what is supposed to be his death, she is overcome because it looks as though her last hope is gone. In the same way Lavinia looks to Orin to bring about the punishment and redeem the honor of the family name. In the Greek dramas there is no idea of any enmity between brother and sister after the murder as there is in the O'Neill drama. Orestes and Electra express a great love for each other just as Orin and Lavinia expressed upon the arrival of the former, and in the Greek dramas this love lasts throughout. I have mentioned the fact that Orin felt how his sister had driven him, and he torments her with his strange accusations. For this phase of the relationship Mr. O'Neill must be indebted to Euripides because in the "Electra" of Euripides the daughter is seen more as a driving and impelling force. To illustrate this fact I shall recall the scenes between Orestes and Electra in the above mentioned play in which the death of Aegisthus and the death of Clytemnestra are being planned. When Orestes asks how he may bring about the death of Aegisthus, the old tutor speaks up and

tells him how he can attack Aegisthus at the sacrifice when the latter is unprotected by Argive men. Then it is significant to note that when he asks for a plan to slay Clytemnestra, it is Electra who plans for the death of her mother. Her plan, briefly stated, is for the old tutor to go to the Queen and announce to her that her daughter has given birth to a male child and that it is time for certain rites to be performed. Thus when the Queen comes to perform these rites, she will be trapped. This plan is stated in the following conversation.

Orestes. How then together shall I slay them both?
Electra. I will form measures for my mother's death.
Orestes. Fortune shall guide them to a good event.
Electra. May she in this be aiding to us both!
Orestes. It shall be so; but what dost thou devise?
Electra. To Clytemnestra go, old man, and say
To a male child Electra hath giv'n birth.
Tutor. That she long since, or lately bore this child?
Electra. Tell her the days require the lustral rites.
Orestes. And how my mother'sdeath doth this effect?
Electra. Hearing my child-bed illness, she will come.
Tutor. She hath no tenderness for thee, my child.
Electra. Nay, my parturient honours she will weep.
Tutor. Perchance she may: but brief thy purpose speak.
Electra. Death, certain death awaits her, if she comes.
Tutor. Within these gates then let her set her feet.
Electra. Soon to the gates of Pluto shall she turn.[1]

It can be seen by this conversation that it is Electra in this Greek drama who takes the lead, and it is this Electra who influenced Mr. O'Neill the most in his portrayal of Lavinia. She makes the arrangements just as Lavinia does, and Orestes carries out her plan with somewhat the same feelings that were found in Orin Mannon. Orestes' feelings at the completion

1. Everyman Ed., The "Dramas of Euripides" Vol. 1. P. 177

of the crime are very similar to those expressed by Orin when he finds the dead body of his mother. To illustrate this similarity I should like to recall the scene in "Mourning Becomes Electra" where Orin tells his mother of Brant's death. At first he is harsh and cruel in his accusations, and then when he sees the depth of her grief, his pity is aroused and he asks her to forgive him. Here Mr. O'Neill's character of Orin corresponds to the character of Orestes who is moved to pity in the Euripides drama just as he is about to kill his mother, but Electra has driven him to the deed and he carries it out. This immediately recalls Lavinia who commands Orin to go into the house when she sees that he is becoming sympathetic. She taunts him and scorns his pity, and he is not able to combat her attacks.

> Lavinia. (With bitter scorn) Orin! After all that's happened, are you becoming her crybaby again? (Orin starts and gets to his feet, staring at her confusedly, as if he had forgotten her existence. Lavinia speaks again in curt commanding tone that recalls her father.) Leave her alone! Go in the house! (As he hesitates--more sharply) Do you hear me? March!
>
> Orin. (Automatically makes a confused motion of military salute--vaguely) Yes, sir. (He walks mechanically up the steps--gazing up at the house--strangely) Why are the shutters still closed? Father has gone. We ought to let in the moonlight. (He goes into the house.)[1]

O'Neill was influenced the most in his character of Lavinia by the Electra of Euripides, and I do not believe that this is shown more clearly anywhere than in the conversation between Orestes and Electra just previous to the murder of the

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 179

mother. The feelings expressed are very similar to those written above. The sister seems to have no hesitancy at all in performing the deed.

Orestes. So let it be. But bear this body hence,
My slaves; to darkness let it be consigned;
That when my mother comes, before she feels
The deadly stroke, she may not see the corpse.
Electra. Forbear; to other subjects turn we now.
Orestes. What, from Mycenae see I aid advance?
Electra. This is no friendly aid; my mother comes.
Orestes. As we could wish, amidst the toils she runs.
Electra. High on her car in splendid state she comes.
Orestes. What shall we do? Our mother shall we kill?
Electra. On seeing her hath pity seized thy heart?
Orestes. She bore me, bred me; her how shall I slay?
Electra. As she thy noble father slew and mine.
Orestes. O Phoebus, wild and rash the charge thou gav'st.
Electra. Who then are sage, if Phoebus be unwise?
Orestes. The charge to kill my mother: impious deed!
Electra. What guilt were thine t' avenge thy father's death?
Orestes. Now pure, my mother's murderer I should fly.
Electra. Will vengeance for thy father be a crime?
Orestes. But I shall suffer for my mother's blood.
Electra. To whom thy father's vengeance then assign?
Orestes. Like to the gods perchance some demon spoke.
Electra. What, from the sacred tripod! Vain surmise.
Orestes. Ne'er can my reason deem this answer just.
Electra. Sink not, unmanned, to weak and timorous thoughts.
Orestes. For her then shall I spread the fatal net?
Electra. In which her husband caught by thee was slain.[1]

We can see from these speeches of the two sisters that they are only anxious to have their mothers suffer for their crimes. There seems to be no hesitancy in them caused by the crime of matricide. However, a difference does occur after the murder. The Greek girl, Electra, feels the horror of the action in which she has actually taken part, but Lavinia does not permit humanity to express itself at all. When she tells her mother that she can live, it seems almost as if she were on the verge

1. Everyman Ed., The "Dramas of Euripides" Vol. 1 P. 186

of softening, but she immediately recalls herself and insists that the deed has been one of justice. The contrast to this is brought out very powerfully by Euripides in his "Electra".

Orestes. O Earth, and thou all-seeing Jove, behold
These bloody, these detested deeds! In death
Stretched on the ground beneath my hand they lie,
Both lie, a sad atonement for my wrongs.
Electra. Much to be mourned, my brother, to be mourned
With tears, and I the cause. Unchecked, unawed
I to my mother came, I boldly came
To her that gave me birth. Alas thy fate,
Thy fate, my mother! Thou hast suffered ills,
And from thy children, whose remembrance time
Can ne'er efface, deeds ruthless, and far worse
Than ruthless: yet with justice hast thou paid
This debt to vengeance for my father's blood.
Orestes. O Phoebus, vengeance from thy hallowed shrine
Didst thou command, unutterable deeds,
But not obscure, through thee are done, from Greece
Shall I now go, what hospitable house?
Who will receive me? Who, that fears the gods,
Will look on me, stained with my mother's blood?
Electra. And whither, to what country shall I fly,
Wretch that I am? What nuptials shall be mine?
What husband lead me to the bridal bed?
Orestes. Again, again thy sober sense returns,
Changed with the gale: thy thoughts are holy now,
Then ruled by frenzy. To what dreadful deeds,
O thou most dear, hast thou thy brother urged
Reluctant? Didst thou see her, when she drew
Her vests aside, and bared her breasts and bowed
To earth her body, whence I drew my birth,
Whilst in her locks my furious hand I wreathed?
Electra. With anguished mind, I know, thou didst't proceed,
When heard thy wailing mother's piteous cries.
Orestes. These words, whilst with her hand she stroked
my cheeks,
Burst forth, 'Thy pity I implore, my son:'
Soothing she spoke, as on my cheeks she hung,
That bloodless from my hand the sword might fall.
Chorus. Wretched Electra, how couldst thou sustain
A sight like this? How bear thy mother's death,
Seeing her thus before thine eyes expire?
Orestes. Holding my robe before mine eyes I raised
The sword, and plunged it in my mother's breast.

Electra. I urged thee to it: I too touched the sword.
Chorus. Of deeds most dreadful this which thou hast done.
Cover thy mother's body; in her robes
Decent compose her wounded limbs--thou gavst
Being to those who were to murder thee.
Electra. Behold my friends, and not my friends, we wrap
Her robes around her, to our house the end
Of mighty ill.[1]

I should like now to briefly summarize the influence of the character of Electra upon Lavinia Mannon. In all of the Greek plays there is the same love between father and daughter that is found between Lavinia and her father. There is also the same hatred between mother and daughter arising from different emotions. There is the same affection of brother for sister which becomes strained in the modern drama because of a difference in the character of Lavinia and in the manner in which Orin regarded her. At this point Eugene O'Neill leaves the general influence of Aeschylus and Sophocles and takes the "Electra" of Euripides as his chief pattern. This is illustrated in the change in the character of Lavinia which is quite different from the Electra of either Aeschylus or Sophocles. From Euripides comes the idea of making the sister the leading figure in the drama, and with the exception of the outcome, Lavinia is very much like the Electra of Euripides. This is to be found first in the manner in which she does the planning and directs her brother. This Electra is more independent and is not merely content to lament her father's death, but is willing to take an active part in avenging this death. She and Lavinia are alike in their hatred which leads for a time even

1. Everyman Ed., The "Dramas of Euripides" Vol. 1 P. 192-193

in the Greek to a complete absence of any feeling of tolerance or mercy. Another important similarity is to be found in the hold which this Electra and Lavinia have upon their brothers. They not only plan their attack, but they lead in the actual carrying out, and they are the ones who taunt their brothers upon any show of hesitancy. However, the similarities with even the more impelling Electra of Euripides end here, and the interpretation of O'Neill arises in its differences.

I have already pointed out the fact that after her mother's death, Lavinia seemed to feel no remorse and went about her life almost with the attitude that it was now her turn to live and she intended to enjoy life. She had driven Orin to really be the cause of his mother's death, but she accepted none of the guilt and in no way shared his suffering. This is where Eugene O'Neill's interpretation differs from the Greek. He does not feel that the sister should be permitted to live a perfectly peaceful life after being the cause of her mother's death. She had not killed her mother with her own hand, but she had been jealous of Brant's love for her mother and she was the driving force back of Christine's death. She sat in judgment upon her mother and found her guilty and she took upon herself the office of punishment. While the Furies in Aeschylus are the embodiment of a vindictive power pursuing Orestes, O'Neill transfers this driving vindictive power to Lavinia so that she pursues her mother and brings about her ruin. Lavinia was too intolerant and self-righteous for her own safety, and she has

to be brought to a realization of the fact that she too has been guilty of a crime and thus she cannot expect to marry and live a normal life in a normal society with this crime in the background. Electra is not made to suffer ultimately in the Greek as Lavinia Mannon is.

CHAPTER VI.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PLOT IN O'NEILL AND IN THE GREEK DRAMATISTS

In approaching a comparative study of plot in the modern drama and in the Greek, it will be seen that the main events in the O'Neill play closely follow those of the Greek, but the interpretation of the final outcome is quite different. As I stated earlier in this discussion, the Greek interest for the most part is in the great moral issue to which the character is made subordinate. This is particularly true of the dramas of Aeschylus, but in Euripides there is more emphasis placed upon the individual and it is this latter fact that makes the influence of Euripides upon Mr. O'Neill so marked. In "Mourning Becomes Electra" there is analytical interest in the character and this is where the emphasis in the drama seems to be placed. Looking briefly in review at the events of the plot, there can be noted a very close connection between the ancient and the modern plays. The murder of the father in both instances takes place right after his return from battle. The crime is committed in a more stealthy manner in the modern drama and Christine Mannon tries to conceal her deed which is announced openly by Clytemnestra. Then the pursuit of the mother by the daughter is much more marked in the case of the O'Neill drama where Lavinia immediately begins to plan a trap for her mother. This

is most closely approached in the plans of Euripides' Electra when she devises a scheme for attracting her mother to her home. The death of the mother in the modern drama is in the form of a suicide thus differing in its actual form from the Greek where Clytemnestra is murdered. However, we are interested in the affect of this death upon the son, and the affect upon Orin is the same as it would have been had he murdered his mother as Orestes did. He feels that he has caused her death and thus the abnormal state of his mind increases until he may be said to have reached a stage of madness caused by the torment which he was forced to suffer. In the O'Neill drama there is no relief from this suffering and Orin Mannon goes down under it to his own death while Orestes is forgiven and is able to continue his life in an average normal condition. The influence of the Greek upon the plot seems to lessen after the death of Christine, and O'Neill shows what he feels must inevitably be the outcome of the tragedies in these human lives. In connection with the characters of Electra and Lavinia, I have previously mentioned the difference in the outcome of their fates. O'Neill feels that Lavinia has no right to marry Peter and lead a happy life when she was responsible for the death of her mother and also that of Orin. O'Neill does not wish to excuse the crimes of Christine any more than the Greek did those of Clytemnestra, and yet, he felt just as the Greek did that the crime of killing one's mother should not go un-

punished. Therefore his Electra is found at the end in the act of secluding herself to live with her past deeds. In speaking of the ending of "Mourning Becomes Electra" I should like to pause for a moment to discuss very briefly another Greek influence upon the characters as they act. I recall the story of Oedipus and his family as it is told by Sophocles in his "Oedipus Tyrannus", "Oedipus Coloneus", and "Antigone" and in the "Seven Against Thebes" by Aeschylus. I shall not endeavor to relate the stories of these dramas because that would require too much time and would not be to the point, but it is important to note the theme back of all of these dramas. This theme has to do with the idea of fate in the family of Oedipus which drives them on in the form of a dreadful curse and brings tragedy to Oedipus, and later to his two sons and even to his daughter and her lover. It seems to be something back in the family which drives everything before it and scatters violence in its path. This idea of fate appears in the O'Neill drama in the family of Abe Mannon and then in Ezra Mannon's generation and finally in Lavinia and Orin. There seems to be some awful thing in their family which works its way out and brings tragedy wherever it goes. Thus, while there is no influence of the actual facts of the Oedipus dramas upon the modern play, there is the idea of the fate in these human lives over which they are powerless and which reappears in the several generations. Returning now to the differences in the interpretations, there is the feeling

that the psychology of O'Neill is rather morbid while that of the Greeks is more sane and balanced. This may be due to the fact that in "Mourning Becomes Electra" there is no divine sanction to the deeds which demand that the children exact vengeance for the murder of their father. In the Greek the tormenting Furies are appeased and particularly in Aeschylus these horrible creatures are turned into gracious beings who, through the intercession of the goddess of wisdom are lead to temper their justice with mercy. It has been said that Aeschylus in this way reconciles two mutually antagonistic ideas and it seems that it is this very reconciliation which gives to the Greek the sane and quiet outlook. In the O'Neill there is not an idea of reconciliation. Lavinia has been the cause of some dreadful actions and consequently she must suffer for the remainder of her life and she is denied a natural human existence. The Greek shows how Electra urged Orestes to the deed of killing his mother, but the Greek does not seclude the daughter forever so that she may be punished. This seems to be due to a difference in the psychology of the modern author and the ancients. O'Neill seems to feel very keenly the horror of having Lavinia sit in judgment upon her mother and then condemning her. Euripides shows the horror that Electra feels along with Orestes when she realizes the thing that they have done, but Lavinia does not give way to any feeling of guilt and it seems that she actually does not blame herself because she thinks that she

has wrought justice. When the reading of the O'Neill drama is finished, there seems to be left the feeling that no human being can pass sentence upon another no matter what the person has done.

In order to thoroughly understand the difference in the interpretation of the Oresteia theme as it is presented in "Mourning Becomes Electra", it will be necessary to see what the psychology is that prompted Mr. O'Neill to form the outlook that he had in dealing with this story. It has been mentioned that his drama tends to the morbid which is not found at all in the Greek. There is an emphasis laid upon certain relations within the Mannon family itself which have to do with the jealous hatred of Lavinia for her mother because the latter was loved by Brant, and also Orin's incestuous love for his sister. This difference in interpretation which is so far removed from the Greek is due to the author's interest in the psychology of Sigmund Freud. This psychology tends to explain certain motives in human behavior by references to primary sex instincts. O'Neill uses this to stress the fact that the relations within the family were not normal and he places the actions of the characters upon a basis explained in the psychology of Freud. In his book "The Interpretation of Dreams" Freud shows a study of the meanings of dreams and how these meanings are connected with the normal and abnormal mental state of the individual. O'Neill does not analyze dreams but he does show abnormal mental states with

many of the same causes for these states that Freud gives as causes for certain dream material. It will also be remembered that Orin Mannon refers to dreams or hallucinations which he had when recovering from his head wound suffered during the war. It is found stated in Freud that often a person tortured by physical and mental suffering will have dreams of completely realized happiness and well-being. This could very easily have been the case of Orin who dreamed of absolute happiness with his mother. It is also pointed out in the Freudian psychology that much of the symbolism which is commonly attributed to dreams can also belong to unconscious thinking. Freud also gives several instances of dislike on the part of the mother for her own daughter which arose from the daughter's preference for the father and the consequent jealousy which this caused the mother. This would recall the feelings between Christine and Lavinia and the early hatred in their lives. Freud considers the relation of children to their brothers and sisters which, he states, is erroneously conceived to be a loving one since estrangements often exist from the time of childhood and continue throughout life. It is often the case that hostility in childhood will be followed by deep affection in adult life, and many adults will bear affection for brothers and sisters for whom they had nothing but hostile feelings as children. Freud makes the following statement concerning the development of childhood morality.

> It is true that morality does not develop simultaneously in all departments, and furthermore, the duration of the unmoral period of childhood is of different length in different individuals. In cases where the development of this morality fails to appear, we are pleased to talk about 'degeneration'; they are ordinarily cases of arrested development. Where primary character has already been covered up by later development, it may be at least partially uncovered again by an attack of hysteria. The correspondence between the so-called hysterical character and that of a naughty child is strikingly evident. A compulsion neurosis, on the other hand, corresponds to a character that is supermoral and is imposed upon the primary character asserting itself as an increased check.[1]

Regarding the relation of Orin Mannon to his mother, it is quite clear that O'Neill must have been influenced in this idea also by the belief which Freud states that sexual preference becomes noticeable at a very early age in childhood. This psychologist states that causes for hostility between parents and children are very numerous.

> The more despotically the father ruled in the ancient family, the more must the son have taken the position of an enemy, and the greater must have been his impatience, as designated successor, to obtain the mastery himself after his father's death.[2]

This dislike between father and son is also often caused by the fact that the father frequently deprives the son of the right of choosing his own career.

> The causes of conflict between mother and daughter arise when the daughter grows up and finds a guardian in her mother, while she desires sexual freedom, and when, on the other hand, the mother has been warned by the budding beauty of her daughter that the time has come for her to renounce sexual claims.[3]

1. "The Interpretation of Dreams" Sigmund Freud P. 212
2. Ibid. P. 217
3. Ibid. P. 218

This leads to the very common happening that from a very early period the first inclinations of the girl are directed toward the father and those of the boy toward the mother.

> The father thus becomes an annoying competitor for the boy, as the mother does for the girl, and we have already shown in the case of brothers and sisters how little it takes for this feeling to lead the child to the death-wish. Sexual selection, as a rule, early becomes evident in the parents; it is a natural tendency for the father to indulge the little daughter, and for the mother to take the part of the sons, while both work earnestly for the education of the little ones when the magic of sex does not prejudice their judgment. The child is very well aware of any partiality, and resists that member of the parental couple who discourages it. To find love in a grown-up person is for the child not only the satisfaction of a particular craving, but also means that the child's will is to be yielded to in other respects. Thus the child obeys its own sexual impulse, and at the same time re-enforces the feeling which proceeds from the parents, if it makes a selection among the parents that corresponds to theirs.[1]

Freud then gives the case of a young man who recalls Orin Mannon and his strange dreams and obsessions. The man of whom Freud tells had an obsession that he would kill everyone whom he met. This young man was quite normal and was highly cultured. Freud undertook to cure him.

> The analysis--which, moreover, led to a cure--discovered murderous impulses toward the young man's somewhat over-strict father as the basis of these disagreeable ideas of compulsion--impulses which, to his great surprise, had received conscious expression when he was seven years old, but which, of course, had originated in much earlier years of childhood. After the painful illness and death of the father, the obsession reproach transferred to strangers in the form of the afore-mentioned phobia, appeared when the young man was thirty-one years old.[2]

1. "The Interpretation of Dreams" Sigmund Freud P. 218
2. Ibid. P. 221

After regarding these instances of the Freudian psychology in which Eugene O'Neill was so deeply interested, it is clear that the relations of the Mannon family in "Mourning Becomes Electra" are a product of this psychology. From his study of Freud, O'Neill must have derived the idea of the mother-daughter relation and the mother-son relation. Freud accounts for dislikes between mothers and daughters which O'Neill accents by having Lavinia want her mother's lover for herself. To O'Neill her punishment of her mother was merely a pretense, and in reality arose from jealousy which came from the love which existed between Adam Brant and Christine. This study of Freudian psychology would also explain Lavinia's love for her father and Orin's love for his mother by referring to sexual preferences common in childhood and often continuing for many years. The strained relations between Ezra and Christine would have the tendency to accentuate this preference particularly since Orin feared his father from early childhood. There exists one more relationship in the modern drama which is very far removed from anything found in the Greek dramas. This is the incestuous love of Orin for his sister. This is brought out most strongly at the end of the drama.

> Orin. And I suppose you think that's all it means, that I'll be content with a promise I've forced out of you, which you'll always be plotting to break? Oh, no! I'm not such a fool! I've got to be sure--(She doesn't reply or look at him. He stares at her and slowly a distorted look of desire comes over his face) You said you would do anything

for me. That's a large promise, Vinnie--anything!

Lavinia. (Shrinking from him) What do you mean? What terrible thing have you been thinking lately--behind all your crazy talk? No, I don't want to know! Orin! Why do you look at me like that?

Orin. You don't seem to feel all you mean to me now--all you have made yourself mean--since we murdered Mother!

Lavinia. Orin!

Orin. I love you now with all the guilt in me--the guilt we share! Perhaps I love you too much, Vinnie!

Lavinia. You don't know what you're saying!

Orin. There are times now when you don't seem to be my sister, not Mother, but some stranger with the same beautiful hair--(He touches her hair caressingly. She pulls violently away. He laughs wildly). Perhaps you're Marie Brantôme, eh? And you say there are no ghosts in this house?

Lavinia. (Staring at him with fascinated horror) For God's sake--! No! You're insane! You can't mean--!

Orin. How else can I be sure you won't leave me? You would never dare leave me--then! You would feel as guilty then as I do! You would be as damned as I am![1]

This feeling in Orin's mind had no doubt existed before this declaration, but was heightened by his own abnormal state and by the change in Lavinia's personal appearance and actions. This relation also shows the influence of the psychology of Freud, because none of these ugly relationships are dealt with by the Greek dramatists. Thus the plot as well as the characters manifest the way in which Eugene O'Neill interprets the Orestea theme in the light of the Freudian psychology which is so different from the Greek spirit and sensibility in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

1. "Mourning Becomes Electra" Eugene O'Neill P. 238-239

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION

When this modern drama is placed beside the Greek dramas, it will not be found to be equal to them. However, it is only fair to say that there is a great depth of thought in the "Mourning Becomes Electra" of O'Neill and the characters are wonderfully presented in all of their complexities. Lavinia and Orin Mannon particularly make very unusual studies and show much thought on the part of the author. There are several factors which would cause the modern drama to be placed some degrees below the dramas of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The mode of presentation itself lacks the grandeur and dignity of the ancient mode. The very detail of the character study, however fascinating it may be, tends to detract from some of the dignity and universality which the Greek dramas possessed to such a marked degree. There is much more actual violence presented upon the stage in the O'Neill play and the language in some instances would have offended the finer sensibilities of the Greeks who preferred to have their imaginations touched rather than anything as physical as sense perception. In spite of these elements which will prevent this drama from acquiring the greatness of the powerful, universal Greek dramas, it does have a power of its own and shows a most thoughtful handling of a very rich theme. It is to be remembered that we come in contact with the mind of the author through his interpretation. The use of an old theme is of no essential value, but

it is how that theme is interpreted that is of primary interest. Mr. O'Neill is not a Greek in his outlook upon life, and the absolute lack of moral in his drama must come from his interest in the Freudian psychology. It has already been said that the Greek was interested in the moral issue of the play and the ethical and religious questions involved, and there is a complete absence of this in "Mourning Becomes Electra". O'Neill tends to stress the rather sordid relations in the family rather than any universal laws. He makes of the question of love both in the family and outside of it an ugly thing arising only from sexual impulses and jealousies and not from any filial devotion or nobility. It is true that this does add to the intricacies of the main characters, but on the contrary it lessens the nobility and loftiness of the drama as a whole. This does not mean that there has to be a lesson in every piece of literature, but "Mourning Becomes Electra" is not moral in any sense. Its psychology is very introspective and it is inclined to be morbid. In the Greek dramas Electra and Orestes punish their mother because they feel that she has violated a powerful ethical principle and it becomes the duty of the son as commanded by the gods to avenge his father's death. Lavinia and Orin punish their mother also, but it is not because of their belief in a principle. Lavinia punishes her mother because of an ugly, selfish jealousy and Orin is driven along by his abnormal love

for his sister. O'Neill felt that Lavinia had to be punished and this interpretation is doubtless correct, if his interpretation of her motives is to be regarded. The Greek did not have her acting under any such motives and therefore, she is not punished. In my opinion there is a great gap between the modern drama and the ancient. It is a gap made by the difference in stress laid upon character in the modern and moral issue in the ancient. Therefore, there is great power in Mr. O'Neill's play in his characters and their complex psychology, but this is not great enough to offset the calm dignity of the Greek dramas. The latter deal with just as terrifying situations as the former, but the classical presentation never loses its own inherent greatness by any sordid and offending detail. It will hardly be possible for "Mourning Becomes Electra" to attain universality, because its morbid qualities will always keep it down in the realm of the particular which will certainly arouse emotions, but never the noblest and finest of emotions.

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